

Volume 15, Number 95 \$1.25

FOCUS

MIDWEST



George Salisbury, Jazz Pianist

HELEN ASHMORE

Tolson and The Harlem Renaissance

ROBERT FARNSWORTH

Traveler's Advisory

JAMES MCKINLEY

Voices From The Interior

ROBERT STEWART

Was It A Whitewash?

JUDITH MILLER AND MARK MILLER

Poems by

MARK VINZ, RICHARD E. MCMULLEN, MARY RUTH HERZON,
HAROLD WITT, JOAN YEAGLEY, LYN LIFSHIN,
STEPHEN DUNNING, LYN COFFIN, SIMON PERCHIK,
JEFF WORLEY, JAMES HEARST, DAN JAFFE, JONATHAN GRIFFITH

Looking back with FOCUS/Midwest
Looking forward with the St. Louis Journalism Review

Charles L. Klotzer



FOCUS

MIDWEST

Dear Readers:

After 21 years and 95 issues, FOCUS/Midwest will cease being an independent magazine. It is being incorporated into the St. Louis Journalism Review, which is also published by the FOCUS/Midwest Publishing Company.

This decision was reached only after several years of deliberation. But the strength of our allegiance to FOCUS/Midwest made it most difficult to consider alternatives to maintaining an independent magazine.

The new Focus format in the St. Louis Journalism Review will be guided by the editorial goals of the Review, which is a non-partisan journal of communication and critique of the print and broadcast media.

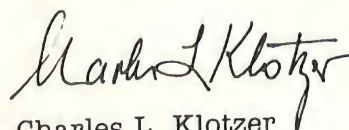
FOCUS/Midwest and the St. Louis Journalism Review have drawn upon the same resources, time, and energies. When we finally determined that the St. Louis Journalism Review would double its frequency from bi-monthly to monthly as of August 1983, broaden its coverage, and double its number of pages, it was evident that these improvements required a consolidation of both publications.

On pages 26-31, readers can follow a brief and impressionistic history of FOCUS/Midwest since 1962 and of St. Louis Journalism Review since 1970. It will satisfy those of our readers who are interested in more details about how we reached our decision.

Current FOCUS/Midwest subscribers will receive the St. Louis Journalism Review for the balance of their subscription. Those who already subscribe to St. Louis Journalism Review will have their subscriptions extended. Since FOCUS/Midwest has not solicited renewals for a number of issues but continued publishing, most of our readers will not be inconvenienced. We urge all FOCUS/Midwest readers to transfer their loyalty to the award-winning St. Louis Journalism Review. It is the only Review in the country written and edited by working journalists.

The many hundreds of Midwesterners, especially the FOCUS/Midwest following in St. Louis, Chicago, and Kansas City, and our staff who should be individually cited and thanked, can take satisfaction that their labors were not in vain. The work of only some is mentioned in the back pages of this issue. They and the many others not mentioned can take pride that they have played a role in adding more than 3,000 pages to the political, social, and cultural literature of this region.

The spirit of FOCUS/Midwest is very much alive and will invigorate the many pages of the St. Louis Journalism Review you will be reading.



Charles L. Klotzer

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

FOCUS

MIDWEST

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THE COVER

In a nostalgic bow to the labor of 22 years, the background of this cover uses the same map published on Vol. 1, No. 1. It was then made available to FOCUS/Midwest by the Mercantile Library of St. Louis. The cover features a map of the Louisiana Territory and the River Mississippi by John Renex, ca. 1740. It is crowded with details showing the routes of DeSoto in 1540, M. Denis in 1713, and gives the Indian location of the Osages, Apaches, Podoncas, Wandering Indians, and Man-Eaters.

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The meaning of hope

How does one summarize in one page the core idea of nearly a generation of work, of 95 issues and more than 3,000 pages published since June 1962?

Past editorials have ranged over the whole gamut of concerns which preoccupy people who believe—dare we be trite—in the American dream. Whatever individual predispositions, aspirations are rather alike: a reasonable degree of prosperity, a measure of recognition, health, happiness, and security, also equality, freedom, and justice, but not necessarily in that order. The difficulties arise from the paths we chart trying to reach these goals. This even applies to non-Western ideologies.

Since such ultimate goals are utopian, totally desirable but only partially attainable, political and social conflict is a permanent and necessary condition in distilling a consensus of approach. The broader the representation in this consensus, the more peaceful our relationships and, as an index of our humanity, the more intensely we hope.

Without hope, we—whether as individuals or nations—become destructive of ourselves and others.

Very simply, then, the aim of a healthy and progressive society must be to establish the rules that permit its citizens to entertain hope, hope based on real expectations to reach up, whatever “up” may mean.

A classic study is the Jefferson Bank case.

When in 1963 a coalition of blacks and others boycotted the Jefferson Bank in St. Louis, the purpose was not a disruption of social intercourse but an expression of hope that direct action could improve employment conditions for blacks (Vol. II No. 10).

As we publish this final issue, a new coalition with a few of the old participants are calling for a new boycott. In 1963, the hope was to increase employment of blacks per se. In 1984, the hope is for an increase of blacks at the managerial level. Who knows, by 2003, blacks may have accumulated enough wealth to hope for equal representation on the bank's board of directors.

When we ask whether FOCUS/Midwest met its goals, it is obvious from the above that just as goals must always be elusive for people, so they are for magazines with a cause. But if we ask, has FOCUS/Midwest raised the consciousness of concerned Midwesterners in general and its readers in particular, contributed towards a workable consensus by influencing events and devel-

opments, all in the hope of creating a just society, the answer is an unequivocal yes. On the very day these comments are written, a phone call from a researcher in Moberly, Missouri, refers to the assistance two recent issues on prison conditions and reform have been in compiling data for possible legal action. The ripples are making ever wider circles.

Within a limited timeframe, circumscribed by area, resources, and purpose, FOCUS/Midwest was and will continue to be even after cessation another actor in this process, without beginning or end. Whether FOCUS/Midwest will ever again be an independent journal, we cannot foresee. As we explained on page two, the magazine will be incorporated into the *St. Louis Journalism Review*.

Beyond doubt, though, the Midwest will always have room for one or more progressive journals that can justify their existence by the degree they voice the hopes of the community they serve.

Attn: Librarians:

If your set of FOCUS/Midwest is incomplete, back issues are available at \$2 each plus postage.

For a complete set at sharply reduced prices, please see the announcement on page 24.

If you have any questions about conversion of your FOCUS/Midwest to a *St. Louis Journalism Review* subscription, please write:

Subscription Dept.
FOCUS/Midwest
8606 Olive
St. Louis, MO 63132

George Salisbury, Jazz Pianist

By Helen Ashmore



George Salisbury

George doesn't like this. He just shook his head "no" at the news that we wanted to do a story on him as the great and greatly unknown genius of Kansas City jazz. George Salisbury's reluctance to talk about himself is legend. When William Thompson, media relations man for the Conservatory of Music, was asked to characterize Salisbury's publicity status, he said, "George has been here for 24 years and no one knows it," then added, in crystalline understatement, "George is not, like many other performers, a self-promoter."

Thompson keeps biographical files on Conservatory people. The basic bio form is six pages. Salisbury has filled his out, if that phrase can be used here, ignoring most items and using fewer than 50 words to answer the others. From it, one learns that:

George Salisbury was born February 26, 1918, in Lawrence, Kansas; studied at the Conservatory from 1951 to 1955, has secured "non-academic employment" in night clubs and dance bands; has played with (here are 14 of the words): Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Charlie Parker, Leo Parker, Dinah Washington and Billie Holliday; has recorded on the Lamplighter label with Red Callendar's Trio and on Capitol records with Tommy Douglass; that he spent 25 months in the military and played in the U.S. Army band; and has belonged to the Friends of Jazz, Jazz, Inc., the Parker Foundation, and the Friends of the Library.

That, and a brief story in the University News (5 November 1981), constitutes the body of information about Salisbury at the place he has worked for 24 years.

It's not particularly comforting either that the U News writer describes him as "a quiet, unassuming man whose trademark is the cigar he always seems to be puffing on," because George does not smoke cigars. Never has. He smiles when he sees the story (which he apparently has not read, although it's sat around among the piles of music on his piano for over a month.) "Cigars," he says with quiet amusement, "make me sick. I'm going to speak to that boy."

But George is the "main man" of jazz piano in Kansas City. When I went around asking "Would you like to be on my list of those who consider George Salisbury the best jazz pianist in Kansas City?" everyone who knows him, musicians, musicologists, aficionados and folks who know about music only "what I like," joined to affirm that Salisbury is "it."

Well, a man I will identify only as Dr. D, George's fellow Conservatory faculty

member, demured slightly. "No," he said, his expression marking clearly the regret he felt at the fatuousness of the question, "I won't say that. But I'll say this: There's nobody better than George. And when my wife (an oboist with the Philharmonic) wants an accompanist, she always wants George."

Dr. D's wife is not the only one who wants George Salisbury on the piano when she plays in K.C. So does Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie; so did Charlie Parker. When big name musicians come to town without a pianist, they regularly ask for George. (Basie doesn't, as George likes to point out, although a confused legend has it that George played with Basie. Basie plays his own piano.)

"Oh, people know about him. People know about him," says Milton Hehr, who has left his Conservatory students poring over their final exam and come out into the hall to talk a little George Salisbury. "He's a kind of—I hate to use this word—legend—among musicians and the public here. Not the young rockers of course, but people who have been around." Hehr is enthusiastically and eminently qualified to talk jazz; he is a professor, a musicologist, a jazz historian, who has a program on KCUR each Saturday.

"When musicians don't regularly work together, don't know each other's idiosyncrasies, they may not make a very good unit," Hehr says. "But the musicians around here know that if they get George on piano, the group's going to gel, that it's going to be great. That goes for the public as well as for other performers. People knew George is a true professional."

"His harmonic vocabulary is creative and exciting; he is rhythmically and technically precise. He is a fine jazz musician—which makes him something of an anachronism—he's reached such high perfection that it takes a really knowledgeable audience to listen to him and appreciate what he does. Still he knows—and there's nothing he and I agree on more when we talk—that it's got to swing. Ellington said it and it's the truth in jazz, 'It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.'"

"This doesn't mean he's exciting to watch. Visually, he's so casual, people who think music is entertainment don't think they're being entertained when he plays. But you've got to know how to listen to George—to any good musician."

"George is an improviser—which means that he's a composer, but an instant composer. Like a composer who

writes music down, an improviser has motives and ideas to work with. When George improvises, he's shaping a line—and it's not random; don't ever think it's random. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. There's enormous mental discipline and order in his playing.

"It would be hard to place George in

the Kansas City jazz tradition. He is eclectic—he knows the older traditions: rag, boogie, swing, bop, New Orleans Dixieland, Kansas City style hard blues with a good strong swing.

"But he also knows the classics—teaches Bach, Schubert, Debussy, Chopin. When he practices here in his



studio, he plays classics, not jazz.

"He's in a caliber, a class, with Hank Jones and Jim Rowles (big name New York jazz pianists). He's not only technically precise, he knows all the tunes. He can play big band, small combo, whatever.

"If anything is mediocre—the piano, the other players—George can get pretty uncomfortable. He's a perfectionist. If things aren't right, he'll probably just want it to be over so he can go home."

"One other thing: George is a nice man. He's been around long enough to experience lots of negative and positive racial things; but he works well in a white society—and appears not to have been embittered by bad experiences. He also works within his own understanding of his talent; he knows he has it; he also knows he's not going to go out and promote himself as a big name."



The Rolling Stones are in town and Mick Jagger has been gyrating and howling all over the major media's front pages and prime times for three days now—a crazed Puck in beachcomber's clothing. I'm not even going to ask George what he thinks of Mick Jagger.

It's been snowing all morning when I stomp into the old house at the Conservatory where Salisbury has his teaching studio, just inside the front door, to the left, and through two huge and highly polished drawing room doors. Two noble, old, workhorse grand pianos—a Baldwin and a Steinway—stand side by side. They just about fill the studio. No appointments, artworks or adornments grace the room. There is only the high ceiling and the palpable cold. And the music. Music is piled all over the pianos and file/piled into a tall, metal cabinet in the corner. And there is George, quietly working, who infuses the room with grace and order, with a disciplined energy that says something is going on in this bare room.

"A lot of this music is new but it's never been played," he will say later, and pull a Hovehannes piece from the file/piles, put on his glasses, and start playing it, very humbly, very attentively, very well, like a good student.

He is wearing dark slacks and a dark alpaca cardigan over a green sport shirt. His paunch, just beyond slight now, seems to serve him well; it anchors him firmly to the piano bench, with a sort of sandbag effect.

"It's cold," he says after greetings, looking out at the endless snow. "I may have to go home early." He places his visitor where she is least likely to freeze immediately—near the heat source; he admonishes her to keep her feet off the drafty floor. He then sets about interviewing her.

George is not a talky man. But today he just talks away. He has this sudden interest in politics, in the weather, in the cost of living, in unemployment, in his visitor's children, in her Aunt Helen—in virtually everything except, of course, himself.

After fifteen minutes, I just ask him, "George, are you going to let me ask you some questions about yourself?" And only because he is a kind man who cannot bear to see a grown woman cry, does he gesture a gentle, noncommittal affirmative.

Who was his favorite big name to work with? Or who was hard to work with?

"They were all good," he says. "None of them were prima donnas, is that what you mean?"

What piano players does he admire, have influenced his style?

"Art Tatum," he says, then adds, "but that could be said about every piano player in my generation. Art Tatum was it; he influenced everybody."

Q: Who else? Marylou Williams? (Who played here in the 40's.)

A: "Yes. Put her down. And Teddy Wilson."

Q: What about classical influences?

A: "Ravel," he says, "Debussy."

Q: Where the bio form asks about teachers who've especially influenced you, you left it blank. Are there any?

A: "Howard Taylor—a classical teacher. He played—now don't laugh—duo piano with John Thompson. Later on, he ran Jerry McGee's restaurant, downtown. I was playing down at the College Inn and he came in. He just looked at me (playing jazz) and said 'You always will waste your time, won't you?' He was a good teacher."

Q: What about your parents? Did they encourage you to study music?

A: "They thought it (playing jazz) took me to the wrong places."

Q: When did you start studying piano?

A: "When I was seven, with a cousin, a music student at K.U. When I was nine, I enrolled in some extension classes from K.U."

Q: You came to Kansas City when you were 18, in 1936. Were you excited when

you got your first job? Do you remember it?

A: "Sure. At the taxi dance hall downtown, where Trader's Bank is now. Kids are all excited when they get their first job. I got mine and I've been paying social security ever since." He smiles. George has a great smile.

Q: Did you play in Lawrence before you came here?

A: "Yes, at Saturday night dances, things like that."

Q: So many people admire you. Some people just say right out that you're a genius. But you never push for a big career. Do you think it's at all because you're lazy?

A: (Very quickly, definitely and undefensively): "No."

Q: Do you ever compose, that is, write music?

A: "I hate to write music." Smile.

Q: But do you ever?

A: "A little. Once in a while."

Q: You're an improviser, which means your best work may be lost unless your record. But you don't show much interest in recording.

A: "We recorded some things before Bill (Brandson)—my piano tuner—left town. And when David Baker, who teaches jazz at the University of Indiana, did a workshop here, we recorded some things." (At UMKC)

Q: What about the recordings you mention on your bio—with Red Callender and Tommy Douglass?

A: "Milton (Morris, of Milton's bar) may have those. They're 78's—done in about 1946 and 1949."

Q: If you could have it your way, what would you want in the way of a career? You don't like the idea of working in places like New York and Los Angeles. What would be the ideal for you?

A: "I've never thought about it that way. But I guess it would be ideal to have the right lounge and the right people. That's how you get a good audience, too, without leaving town."

Q: Like Bettye and Milt? (Abel, who played long gigs at the Golden Horse-shoe, the Plaza III and Mr. Putsch's)

A: "Like that."

Q: But you don't like joints.

A: Smile. "A right place is all right."

When Milton Hehr drops by, George pulls out a Classical Keyboard magazine and plays a Billy Taylor tune for him.

"Look at this chord," says George with admiration. "I can't make it at all."

"Yes," Hehr agrees, "That's nice. That's Billy Taylor."

"My hands have shrunk," George says, as he stretches his very long fingers

to make the chord. "We used to play 10ths all the time, years ago. I never play that way any more."



George teaches. He's taught a lot of students in 24 years. One of them, Terry Walker, a teaching assistant at the Conservatory, says of him, "Not everybody can learn from George. I learn partly by watching, by standing behind him and watching his hands . . . like this," Walker demonstrates, peering over the shoulder of his student at the piano.

"He's a good teacher for good students," says Walker, who has reason to know.

"When he teaches, he demonstrates. He can demonstrate any period, mimic any performer. He will say 'In the 40's we played it like this . . . ' (with a stride bass), or 'Oscar Peterson might play it like this.'

"Let's put it this way," says Walker. "George can play every song in every key in every style."

"He's one of the last of the pure jazz pianists. When I hear him play something, I believe it."



George performed recently at a University sponsored event. By the time he came on, the audience had dwindled, ex-

hausted by a long evening of student originality.

George walked on. He was wearing an unmatched suit—dark coat and pants, that somehow looked like a tux; his slightly graying hair reflected the stage lights so that it looked sagely, brightly white. He looked great—in any sense of the word. And then he sat down and played. He delivered everything the devoted audience had stuck it out, hoping for.

But he hardly knew we were there . . . because he not only had good men with him on bass and drums; he also had this great big, beautiful, black Bosendorfer piano, in good tune—and he was just gone with it, concentrating, working it like a kid winding up a Ferrari. It was perfect. George likes that. ■

The Missouri Primary

Five top officeholders seek Governorship

Incumbent. Republican Christopher S. "Kit" Bond, 44, of Kansas City. Elected to a second, non-consecutive term in 1980 with 52.6 percent of the vote. Bond is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term.

Democrats. Leading candidates are Lt. Gov. Kenneth J. Rothman, 48, of Ladue; state Treasurer Mel Carnahan, 49, of Rolla; and former state Senate President Norman L. Merrell, 59, of Monticello.

Republicans. Attorney General John Ashcroft, 41, of Springfield, and St. Louis County Executive Gene McNary, 47, of St. Louis.

Outlook. Bond's retirement will mean a thorough shake-up at the top levels of Missouri government. Five of the state's leading officeholders have decided to abandon their posts in hopes of succeeding him in the Statehouse.

Rothman is the Democratic front-runner. After nearly two decades in the Missouri House, including a three-year stint as speaker in the late 1970s, Rothman has been unofficially campaigning to succeed Bond virtually since his election as lieutenant governor in 1980.

Rothman's early start has enabled him to develop an organizational edge over his opponents.

Still, Rothman is by no means a certain winner. Born and raised in metropolitan St. Louis, he has the demeanor of a big-city politician, which may work against him as he seeks to line up support in the state's rural regions. He also is bucking historical odds — Missouri has not elected a governor from the St. Louis area since World War II.

Carnahan is working hard to counter the perception that the front-runner is already out of reach. A highly regarded two-term member of the state House in the mid-1960s, Carnahan did not hold public office again until 1980, when he won election to his current post as treasurer. He enjoys a reservoir of name recognition, however, among those who still remember his father, A. S. J. Carnahan, who represented south central Missouri in the U.S. House during the 1950s.

In contrast to Rothman's urban image, Carnahan has a country-boy appeal that likely will benefit him in rural and small-town territory. But he will be challenged there by Merrell, a Lewis County farmer and member of the state Senate since 1970. Merrell has been trying to bolster his name recognition with the familiar tactic of putting in a day's work at various jobs around the state. His lack of previous statewide exposure and lackluster speaking style, however, may make it difficult for him to catch his Democratic rivals.

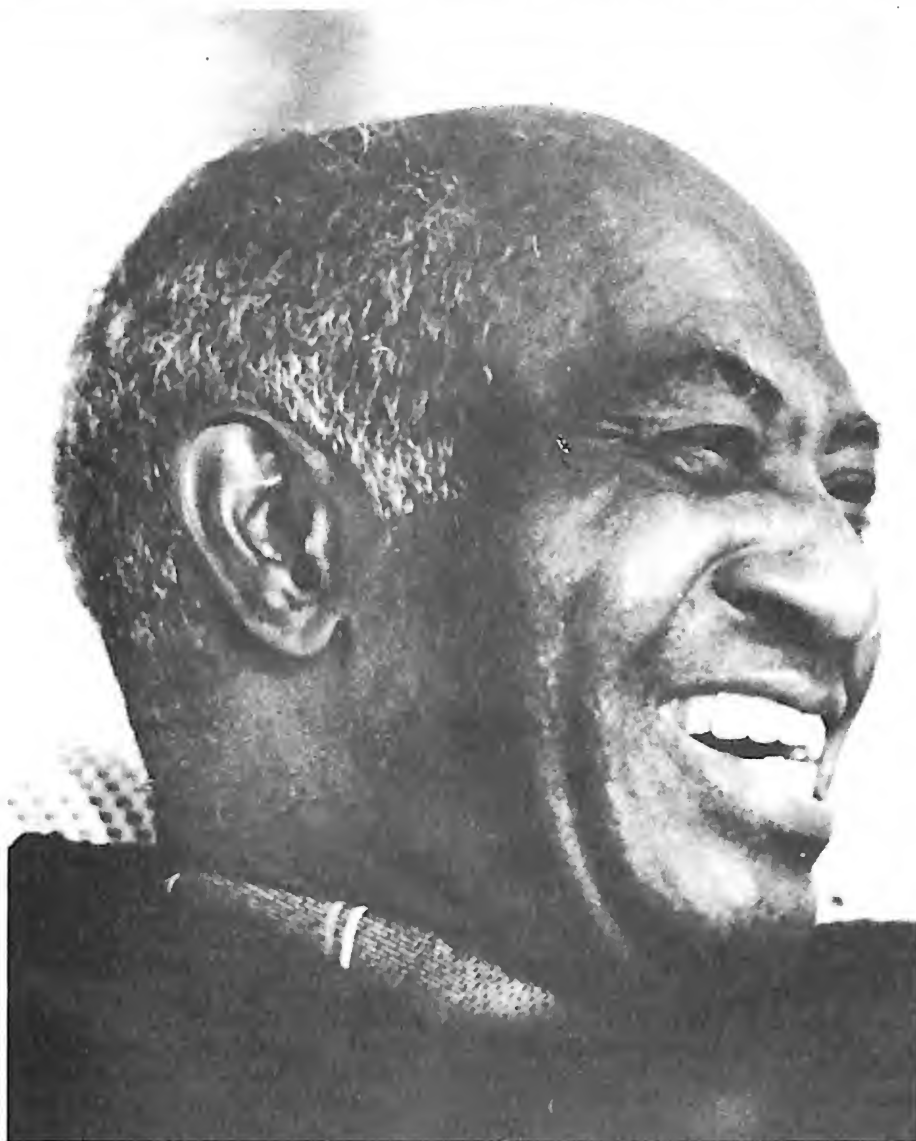
The race for the Republican nomination, meanwhile, begins as a virtual dead heat.

Ashcroft has been a star Republican in state government for over a decade. Appointed state auditor when Bond first won the governorship in 1972, Ashcroft was elected attorney general in 1976. He won re-election in 1980 with 64.5 percent of the vote.

The son of a minister in the fundamentalist Assembly of God church, Ashcroft is an avid churchgoer who has toured the country singing gospel duets. His strong religious ties have given him a powerful base among conservatives in southwest Missouri. Ashcroft has inherited the core of conservative activists who piloted Ronald Reagan's presidential campaigns in Missouri in both 1976 and 1980.

McNary's base is suburban St. Louis, where he has held countywide office since 1966. McNary's close ties to the metropolitan St. Louis business community helped him fund his last statewide campaign, a hard-fought challenge to Democratic Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton in 1980. McNary polled 48 percent of the vote that year.

McNary's business ties will provide him with ample campaign funding for his clash with Ashcroft. But it is unclear how successful McNary will be in using his treasury to reach voters west of St. Louis. He had difficulty relating to the state's rural constituency in his 1980 campaign, and he will be hard-pressed to lure many rural Republicans from Ashcroft's side this year. ■



Melvin B. Tolson

Tolson and the Harlem Renaissance

BY ROBERT FARNSWORTH

The University of Missouri Press is publishing Robert Farnworth biography: "Melvin D. Tolson, 1898-1966, Plain Talk & Poetic Prophecy" in February 1984.

Melvin B. Tolson spent the academic year 1931-32 living in Harlem and working on a Master's degree in comparative literature at Columbia University. It was a crucial year in Tolson's writing career. He had thought of himself as a poet since the age of fourteen when he first published a poem about the wreck of the Titanic in a newspaper in Oscaloosa, Iowa. Since then he had published poems and stories in his high school and university publications, but he had no luck beyond that.

He had, however, begun to acquire a reputation as a teacher, a public speaker, and a debate coach. Such success secured his position as a professor in the English Department at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. That position in turn was important for the support of his growing family. He married in 1922 and by 1931 his family included three sons and a daughter. During the year he attended Columbia University, his wife and children moved in with his parents in Kansas City.

Tolson wrote his Master's thesis on the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. He used his year in Harlem to become personally acquainted with many of the Renaissance writers—most of whom belonged to his own generation—to study their work, and to consider how collectively their careers combined to make a movement. This personal and critical knowledge of the Renaissance subsequently gave his own writing career a clearer sense of purpose.

Harlem of the Renaissance was both a place and a prophetic symbol, but by 1931 it was very visibly affected by the just beginning Great Depression. Hard times were not new to Harlem, but the Depression darkened perceptibly the mood of the entire nation. The blues caught his ear far more readily than jazz, though they were closely related. In 1932 Tolson began writing *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*, a series of brashly vivid poetic sketches, collectively intended to represent both the gritty reality and yet the promise of Harlem.

For Tolson the Renaissance freed the black writer once and for all to use the crude racial and ethnic references caught in everyday American usage with blunt forcefulness and irony. The Depression made class politics seem the most likely basis for fashioning a revolutionary democratic brotherhood of ethnic America. Thus the closing poem of *A Gallery*, "The Underdog," begins belligerently:

I am the coon, the black bastard,
On the *Queen Mary*,
The United Air Lines,

The Greyhound,
The Twentieth Century Limited.
And the promise of union is spelled out
with like bold references in the conclusion:

Then a kike said: *Workers of the world, unite!*

And a dago said: *Let us live!*

And a cracker said: *Ours for us!*

And a nigger said: *Walk together, children!*

The Soviet Revolution and the Russian experiment with Communism was still new enough to have a compelling fascination for those most victimized by the Great Depression. Many saw the Depression as a sure sign of the collapse of capitalism foretold by Marx. Many talented black Americans suffering under the double onus of being black and poor, thought often and longingly about how they could find some other time and place to realize their talents whether they were Marxists or not.

When the Soviet Meshrabpom Film Corporation proposed making a film about the "exploitation of the Negro in America from the days of slavery to the present," to be called *Black and White* and set, though not filmed, in Birmingham, Alabama, they recruited a very unlikely collection of writers, actors, artists, and others both skilled and unskilled. Of those who began the journey sailing on the *Europa* from New York, June 14, 1932, only two were explicit Marxists, Louise Thompson and Mat Crawford. Langston Hughes was the most notable of the group, and in *I Wonder as I Wander* he has left the most detailed account of the comic chaos that prevailed once the group reached Moscow. The project eventually aborted, most probably because the U.S. was close to a decision to grant diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. Wayland Rudd, Tolson's actor friend, was one of three of the group who chose to live the rest of their lives in Russia. The other two were Lloyd Patterson, an artist, and Homer Smith, a postal clerk. Rudd became a popular performer in both films and theater for many years afterward.

Tolson began writing his weekly *Caviar and Cabbage* column for the *Washington Tribune* in 1937 and continued it into 1944. Amid his comments on a great variety of topics concerning the Depression and America's entry into World War II he often reminisces about events of the past. Events from his year's residence in Harlem recur frequently. His memory of this scene with Wayland Rudd, when a flip of the coin decided a man's future, eloquently ex-



presses what it was like to be black, to be an actor, and to live in Harlem in 1932.

Caviar and Cabbage

By Melvin B. Tolson

Perhaps you have seen a copy of Marian Anderson's Souvenir Program, with the pictures of her cameo personality caught in various moods and poses. I like the one of her in Moscow, islanded by the worshippers of her race-eclipsing genius, while Wayland Rudd, the Harlem actor, watches her out of melancholy eyes.

It's a long, hard odyssey to the Moscow Theatre. It's no Glory Road for a beggarly black man on the cavernous stage of the Harlem Opera House. But the quest for the mysterious X is a prop to the spirit.

It was a wintry afternoon in the spring

of 1932. Wayland Rudd and I sat at a table in Mr. Walburg's place on Seventh Avenue, and as usual the little Jew was playing a Negro spiritual on his ancient victrola. It was always dusk in Mr. Walburg's store, and *Go Down, Moses* deepened the dark.

"I have a chance to go to Moscow with Langston Hughes and the Negro actors," Wayland sighed. "The USSR is going to make a Negro movie."

"A grand idea!" I said.

Wayland was in one of his brooding sessions. "A relief from the boredom of Hollywood's black mammys and Uncle Toms," he gloomed, and tapped the saucer with the bottom of his false-silver spoon.

"I wonder how your name would look in Russian!"

Wayland stared beyond me, then pulled a billfold from his inside pocket.

"Now, I have seventy-five bucks. Just enough to pay my rent, past and present."

Peg Leg Snelson used to sing the *Rocky Road Blues* in the Harlem Opera House, and dusky voices flowed into the chorus from the morgue of the balcony. Many a Negro actor kissed the Tree of Hope in front of the Lafayette and uttered a prayer to the goddess of luck. Langston's piano player thumped, thumped the blues until the sun blew out the night-hours in the sky. Broadway critics praised Wayland Rudd's acting in *Blood Stream*; but the play shut itself like a horny turtle and left a perilous world outside, with the *Rocky Road Blues*.

The door dragged open, and a ragged black woman shuffled in. On wintry afternoons, the only things warm in Mr. Walburg's place were the little Jew's heart and the Negro spirituals. I shivered at the table. Mr. Walburg got the snuff from a battered show-case, as the tottering woman extricated the coin from her knotted handkerchief.

Wayland watched the miniature drama out of the corner of his eye, and the shadows sank in his impressionable face. I thought of the odds and ends of races I had seen on the dead-gray streets of Harlem during the Great Depression.

"Hunger is hunger," said the actor, "whether in Harlem or Moscow."

He finished his ice cream. Like Joe Louis, Wayland Rudd seemed never to get enough ice cream, in the summer or winter. Many Negroes are like that. Young Booker T. wanted to become a rich man so he could buy all the gingersnaps he could eat. Perhaps others are like that. I read a tale about a Chinese boy who dreamed a paradise of barns bursting with rice.

"Wayland," I said, "why not try Moscow?"

"But what about my landlord?" he puzzled.

I thought about the old miser in his great fur coat who owned the row of ancient apartment-houses in the block where Wayland Rudd lived. Up and down the street, almost any day, one could hear the Negroes wrangling about the skyscraper rent. In the tomb of a basement bedroom the Black Moses of Harlem had nicknamed the landlord "Judas Pockets." His father had come from Georgia after Sherman had scorched the land to the sea. Only white folk lived in that section of Harlem then, and the legend said the Confederate colonel had willed that no Negro should ever rent one of his apartments. And now Honey Chile sings in her kit-

chenette, before going into her act at Big Blue's By-and-By:

There's a change in the seasons

And a change in the sea.

There's a change in the times,
and I don't mean maybe.

Finally I said to Wayland, "Can't you send the old skinflint his money from Moscow?"

The actor groaned, "I always heard that poet and idiot mean the same thing." On the impulse, he gave his knee a resounding slap. "Say, Mr. Walburg, bring me that dime the old snuff-woman gave you."

As a man of the Harlem world, Mr. Walburg should expect the unexpected. But that afternoon he fumbled with his beard until the impatient actor repeated his request. Mr. Walburg shook the aged cash-register, gently, as if it were an old man that had fallen asleep; then he came to the table, wagging his head.

Wayland thanked him and passed the shiny coin to me. "Flip it," he said.

I got to my feet then placed the dime between my thumb and the tip of my forefinger.

Wayland was as taut as a criminal eyeing the hangman's noose. "Let me flip it," he said. "You call it."

I knew that old trick. Entering with

heartfelt joy into the spirit of the game, I said: "If chance is to decide, let chance have a chance."

"Go ahead," he said doggedly.

The acute quality in his voice jerked me bolt upright. I saw that he was suffering from a great fear, and realized that our tomfoolery had gone too far.

"Old man," I said, "let's call it off."

"Hell, no!"

I hesitated. Mr. Walburg's store was no longer chilly. I was aware that Wayland was pained by my dilemma.

"What's you waiting on?" His voice cracked.

I remembered dimly, in the far-off-past, how Wayland Rudd had railed about an actor whose voice had cracked in the Lafayette Theatre. My flip of the coin was bad.

While it was still in the air, Wayland said: "Tails . . . I stay in Harlem."

The dime hit the dingy floor, rolled a short distance, and lay still. Wayland and I stood foolishly looking at each other. Mr. Walburg hobbled to the coin, pulled at his iron-gray beard, and bent almost double.

"What is it?" said Wayland, with an awful quietness in his voice and manner.

After a decade of silence, Mr. Walburg said, "Heads, gentlemen." ■

Born in Moberly

Melvin B. Tolson was born Feb. 6, 1898, in Moberly, Missouri. His father was a Methodist minister whose church assignment changed frequently during Tolson's youth. The family lived in several small towns of Missouri and Iowa until settling in the Kansas City area in 1915.

For most of his adult life Tolson taught at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma. He was named Poet Laureate of Liberia in 1947, and he was Mayor of Langston for four terms from 1952-1960.

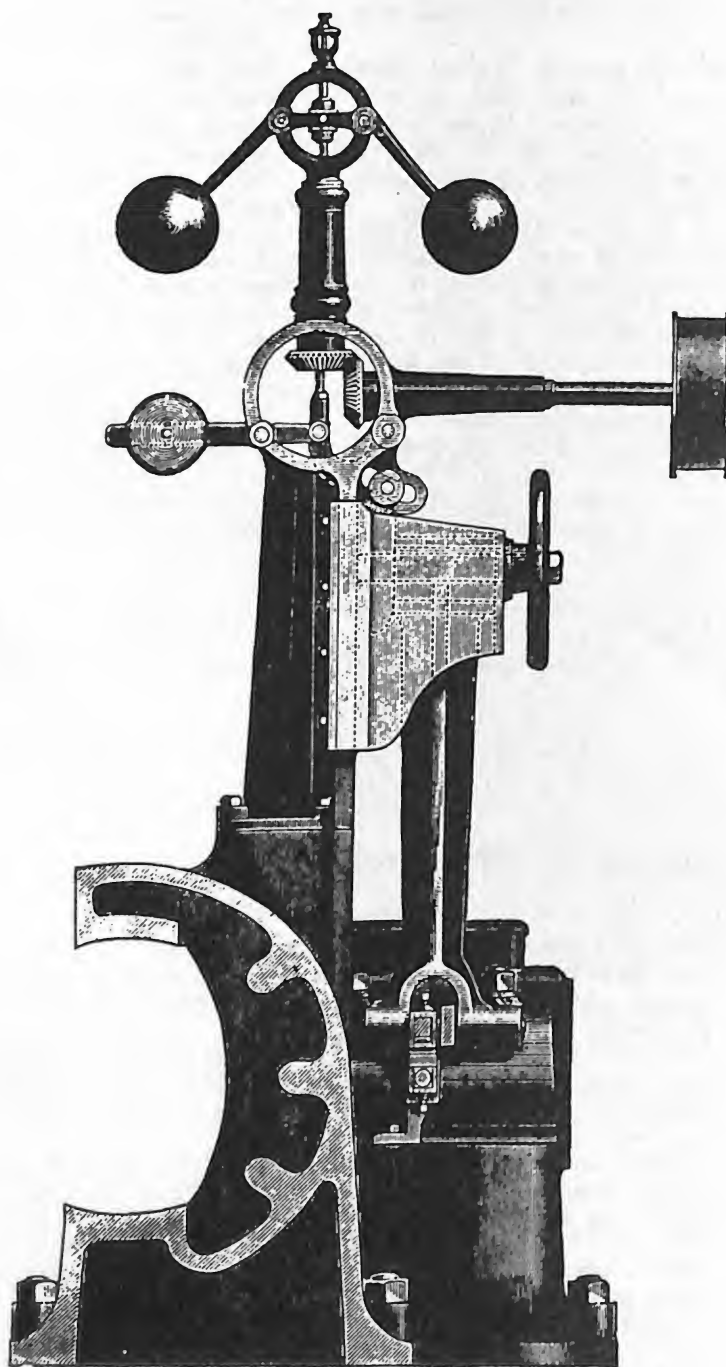
Tolson's major works are *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* and *Harlem Gallery: Book One, the Curator*. The latter was intended as the first of a five volume epic of the historical experience of black America from its African origins to its American present. Karl Shapiro opened his introduction to *Harlem Gallery*: "A great poet has been living in our midst for decades and is almost totally unknown, even by the literati, even by poets."

Tolson died in 1966, a year after the publication of *Harlem Gallery*.

The University of Missouri Press has published *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*, Tolson's first book-length collection of poems, written 1932-1935, and *Caviar and Cabbage: Selected Columns by Melvin B. Tolson from the Washington Tribune, 1937-44*. Both books were edited by Robert M. Farnsworth.

Traveler's Advisory

By James McKinley



Travel, my boss tells me ad nauseum, is broadening. So many interesting things happen. Me, I mostly find it tiresome, or downright frightening. Oh, there was a time, when the trains ran, that I didn't mind. I even sort of liked

the crowds, the claustrophobic coaches, the rotten food, that silver-dollar special. Then we were bound together in some adventure. I mean some destiny in human scale. Smoke and prairies, rattle and empty prattle, but we were going,

you know what I mean?

Not like now when I sit in this silver sausage and hurtle from place to place at 600 miles per hour, six inches from my neighbor, to whom, incidentally, I don't speak, not usually. Except to say, "Excuse me" or "Your tea bag just fell on my trousers." Truth is, most people wouldn't touch you if they could. I could have a heart attack, you know, or a stroke. Or be struck by God, even. Fall utterly apart, go into little pieces in the plastic aisle. No one would notice unless I had my seat-belt unfastened. You think that's just scared old-man talk? I'm only fifty-five, and listen, I've been afraid all my life.

When we were burying my father, I scraped the toe of my new Oxfords on the curb. I told everyone I was sorry, and I was, but I was afraid he'd rise up, all gray and with his hair and nails grown-out, smelling like a spoiled potato, and scold me. My father, he was only fifty-five, too, and I think he was afraid. Mainly of love. Anyway, in airports I fear escalators and crowds. In hotels I worry about fire. On the streets, the swift sidelong glances of night people get me. And loneliness, of course.

Sometimes I fear that fear will paralyze me, make it so I can't travel, earn my living as it's called. That's funny isn't it? A living earned. As though life were some sort of drawing account the Great Auditor will cancel anytime you don't make your quota. Harvard Business School theology. Well, I'm babbling. You noticed that. What can you expect? A half-million miles a year, the whoosh of air conditioning, acrid smell of polyvinylchloride, all cocooned above the fruited plains. Sometimes, on my flights, I see shapes outside the window and then I think my mind's drunk as a monkey. Really, the thing that keeps me sane is my trade.

See, I'm into bio-feedback now. Up from, let's see, comptometers, and adding machines, and crude computers full of tubes and wires. Up through transistors, transducers, silicon chips, the new generations, up to micros. You know the progress. Look at your TV. Today I sell a machine that tracks your heart beat, gauges your sweat rate, turns your brain to waves on a green screen, each one translated into beeps, our new *lingua franca*, I guess. You see you on the screen, you see your heart, hear your brain, like a, well, an anatomical poem. What you are. You know what they're good for? To change what you'd like to change about yourself. Yeah. It's a flawfixer, a cosmic cosmeticizer. You can

cool yourself out or throw yourself into an ecstatic, an electronic Nirvana. No wonder the gadgets sell. Everybody wants to be improved. Everybody knows they're imperfect. The world makes sure they know that.

So I'm in the mainstream. I can promise to make you beautiful, calm, sexy, powerful. They really sell, my machines. Universities, fat-clubs, store-front gurus, insecure housewives and arrogant moguls, frightened salesmen. Mine's old, a Demonstrator. God knows I need it as much as anybody. The only thing it can't help is your looks. I'm getting fat. Too much sitting, me, who ran the quarter in college. And I'm bald. Conservative in politics. I don't run. My entertainment's watching TV sports. You know I like the announcers better than the games. Now them, they seem perfect, that's for sure, don't they?

But let me tell you something. It's not like you think, and I know. I mean, I *know*. Now, this is true, if you want to hear it. It's a little, you know, off-color, but look, I haven't done much. I've fucked three women in my whole life. My wife and two whores. Minneapolis and Tampa, I think. Oh, I suppose I could have gotten more, the whole thing, dinner and drinks and sweet nothings. Cunt fingers around a glass afterwards. But I'm wary. You can get in trouble doing that. Anyway, let me tell you about this one. God, just remembering it is weird. I can feel the B-waves roaring around up there like Hawaiian surf. I been there, too. Anyway, let me tell you. One night I came in late to Pittsburgh. We dropped down over the mills and rivers and grimy glass towers like a berserk bazooka. Rookie pilot, you could tell. The terminal was nearly empty, and my hotel was to hell and gone across the valleys, clear to the other side of town. Thirty-five dollars cab fare, I knew, and didn't much care. It wasn't my money. But still, it's better if you can share a ride. Accountants make me nervous. Well, I grabbed my machine and waved down a cab. He pulled up, and I opened the door, and saw there was someone else in there, off another plane down the road, I guess. A woman. Well, OK, I thought. So I got in, and as we pulled out under those greenish lights that illuminate the freeway signs, I got a good look. You know who was in there with me? You won't believe it! The former Miss America. The Network-TV Sports Smiler. The food processor pitch-person. The first-and-ten-is-desirable-Alabama-Fried-Chicken-governor's wife. Well, you can tell it shocked me. Then she

spoke, those TV-female tones, the vowels dog-paddling around me in honey. She asked the cabbie how far it was to the Sheraton, and I nearly dropped my Demonstrator. We were going to the same hotel, for Christ's sake! Oh, she smelled so good, and for some reason she didn't awe me. I wasn't afraid. Maybe she seemed like an old friend, from all those games. Maybe it was because she was prettier than a Trinitron picture. I took bold action, like a salesman should. I just flat out introduced myself and asked her how she liked her new life with the Chicken Governor and going back to TV and being beautiful. Just that. Nothing about the *Enquirer* stuff, having it with football players and media jocks. She smiled and said her life was fulfilling, so I babbled on. About sports, the weather, commercials, beauty contests, thinking all the time how beautiful she was, how some other guy, always rich, always a franchiser, always has the luck. She nodded and smiled and murmured every once in awhile. Then I mentioned my trade, my machine. She lit up like a screen. You could almost see the selector in her mind flying through its channels when I told her what it could do. She just nodded and looked at me. We drove on through the valley. Sulphur smell filled the cab, and funny orange light from the stacks. I looked across and all at once, like somebody dropping a curtain, this real sorrowful look came over her. She sniffled and said that I probably wouldn't believe it, but she wished she had a machine like mine. She had a problem of her own she'd like to work on. She was worried, terribly worried about herself, she said. Worried that she was just an image, just photos in magazines or lines wiggling across the continent. She felt nobody really cared for *her*, just for her picture, or for being Mrs. Alabama Fried Governor, and how did she know that the cameras hadn't taken herself away and replaced it with this bright empty image?

Well, what could I do? I said she could try my machine. The miasmic, rank Pittsburgh night flashed away in her grin. She patted my hand, squeezed my knee, looked so good, you know, and smiled and smiled and smiled.

In my room . . . you think you know this part, don't you? But you don't. No. I just sat her down, and then, fearlessly, I hooked her up and instructed her. To tell the truth, I didn't know if it would work for her. Can you dispell an *image* with another? Well, I watched as she sent and received her electronic self, watched as her waves flattened and

curved. So much activity, the screen flared with struggle, like lightning in a quiet summer sky, or yin and yang doing a Godzilla film. I watched. She could actually perspire, do you believe it?

I heard the sharp, frantic beeps fight to become a lullaby, and I swear you could see things ooze out of her. Glitz and hype and "Please, love me," all the sour mementos of the guys she'd never loved but screwed so they'd make her a picture on a screen. Images, too, of talking heads, of Frank and Howard and Don and Brent, flowed out. And then a picture of herself spread out like a wish-bone, super secret spices, finger-lickin' good. Oh, God, it all came out. Banality, inanity, glory and lewdness and the sweetest sadnesses fell out into electronic shockfields, like those auras you get when you cut into a leaf. When you take Kurelian photos of mystics or children. I vow, she exuded it all—it smelled like make-up and dead-line perspiration—until a girl's grace came upon her and the video things dissolved. You could actually see it all on the carpet, a pool of green effulgence. Finally, she smiled, like someone had handed her an armful of roses and bowed and called her "Miss."

When she was through, I ordered her up some warm milk and cookies. Can you imagine that? Her cooled out for a bit like an ashram groupie, us sitting there and eating cookies and slugging down Low-Fat. Well, it's true, I swear. She drank her milk, she thanked me, and pecked me on the cheek. Told me all about her baby and how much that meant, like how it was a token of her growing up and not a symbol of status. Told me to visit her sometime. In New York, or down South or up in Washington, maybe, if the Governor got to be Alabama Fried President. Fat chance, I thought, but I said I would, and I'd bring my machine for all three of them. She patted my hand, and I took her to the door, and watched her twinkle off down the hall.

Promise not to laugh if I tell you what happened next? I went in and attached myself, stepped in her pool, and lay down. I took myself in my hand and quieted my waves, my fear, all the images that had come from her to me.

I laid love as flat as a flight map. I've trained myself to that. Easier that way. Nobody's looking, and I'm not scared. When morning came, I made my rounds and got on another night flight, just like this one. Luminous and starry, full of travelers with images of themselves. A flying TV set. All prospects. Do you mind if I turn out the light? ■

Still Life: Below Zero/*Mark Vinz*

This is the time when everything has been put away—the last weeks of winter when the terrible sameness of days lines up like jars of preserves in the cellar. The best ones, the fresh and surprising ones, are gone. All that remains are those that were slid down to the end of the shelf, with no variation except in degree—just more of the same, and more. Winter never saves the best for last, and today it's below zero again, for the 50th or 60th time. No one keeps count, no one needs to be told just how cold it really is. Even the words freeze up.

The houses look tired and indifferent under the gray sky, the children's abandoned snow fort, the footprints drifting over one more time. The husband sits in front of the tv set watching a soap opera. In the kitchen the wife clucks quietly to herself over the drooping geraniums above the sink. Next year they must find a means to go away, far away, to the place of postcards, so far away they will even begin to miss the snow, the hungry icicles hanging from the eaves, the slow breath of the almost empty house.

Still Life: Barber Shop in A Small Town/*Mark Vinz*

The shop is full of men today—a few in business suits and a few in overalls, reading newspapers or magazines or simply staring out at the cars and people moving through the town square. Once in awhile someone will comment on the humidity or the price of gas, and everyone nods and smiles. If they wanted to, they all could call each other by their first names.

Some of the men have close-cropped hair, as though they just had haircuts but have come back today because they don't know what else to do. In fact, nobody has long hair; there are no beards or mustaches, only a few ragged edges around sunburned necks. The two barbers are talking back and forth about fishing. After work they are going to the river just below the dam. They will catch only carp and other rough fish, but it won't matter. When you're not in a barber shop, a river is a good place to be.

The barber cloth snaps and the next customer rises and stretches and moves toward the empty chair. The low hum of clippers swims through turning pages, the little puffs of talcum powder hanging in the air,





Still Life: The Pleasures of Home/*Mark Vinz*

The locusts are back this year, and toward sunset the racket is beyond all toleration—like a giant bandsaw hidden in the tops of the elm trees. But soon it will be dark and there will be a few hours of silence again, broken only by the hiss of tires, a porch door slamming, a barking dog.

The humidity is back again too, the worst this summer it's ever been, worse than any of the old men can remember. There's a dull ring around the streetlight, so heavy it seems to be dripping, as the front porches slowly fill up with people and paper fans. The old women come out after putting away the dishes, and sit in metal lawn chairs, their legs far apart, their stockings rolled down below their knees. The front room windows are streaked with blue and white light from the tv sets, and now and then the angry voice of a child calls out from within the house.

Everyone is thinking about sleep, about damp, sticky sheets. Heat lightning to the south! Perhaps tonight there will be a breeze. Something seems to be stirring out there under the hazy stars, out there on the country roads following themselves through the dark and ripening fields.

Still Life: A Good All-Night Cafe/*Mark Vinz*

The waitresses are high school girls with their boyfriends' graduation rings on chains around their necks. They wait together at the end of the counter, talking about the new movie at the drive-in and a good friend who has just moved away. They are restless. It is nearly midnight and a few people from the bar will probably stop off for breakfast on the way home.

Only a few customers now—a family that just pulled in from the highway for a full thermos of coffee and some french fries to go, two truck drivers talking wearily in the end booth, and three old ladies wearing hats and gloves who have just come from the weekly bridge game at the house of the lawyer's wife.

The manager sits in his little office next to the rest rooms. Receipts are down again. There is probably no good reason to keep open 24 hours anymore, but he for one would hate to come to a town like this and not find a cafe open. He still makes the best coffee in the state and cooks short orders on the graveyard shift. All his life he's had only one motto: maybe things will pick up again next week. Just be sure the counter's clean and the coffee pot is always on.



Snow On The Expressways / *Richard E. McMullen*

The expressways are packed with snow, and I'm getting tired
driving up entrance ramps and down exit ramps.
I've traveled twenty miles an hour on familiar
expressways. I'm turned around. I'm slowing down.
Cars go by me at double my speed.
I'm afraid of hitting and getting hit, of braking and
running off. The windows are rolled up;
all I hear is the cold heater blowing.
And snow is opening up again.

I see you
coming from the opposite direction. You are whistling to something
on the radio. You wave casually driving by.
You're not like that! You're
the kind who helps! You must've thought
I know what I'm doing. Look, I would
not have stopped you, anyway. Even when I was young,
to real cold, to isolation, there was no appeal.

And, after this much driving, I
know it's all like a bewildered drifting
around on familiar expressways, spinning on packed-down
snow, and sliding, slowly, out of control.

Manuscript / *Mary Ruth Herzon*

say I am
enclosed
in an illuminated letter
a backward C perhaps
I wear a red tunic embroidered with mad flowers
and a Thomas Moor scholar's cap
the words coming out of my mouth are
black letters too small for you or me to read
they wind out of the opening
around the top of the splendid letter in which I crouch
begin to uncoil themselves into
an undulating line headed toward
where a sentence should start

the words might say
I'm so
tired
I can make no
place
home

BEBE DIXON / *Harold Witt*

If they wanted to give her things,
clothes, and a little money—
well, what was so wrong about that?
It was easy to say honey
to someone you really liked
and she really liked so many—
such nice sugar daddies.
She wouldn't have taken a penny
from any she detested,
and regularly every week
she went to the priest and confessed it—
he was so understanding—
and he should be—wasn't Jesus?
Most had awful wives
anyway—didn't those guys
deserve to have in their lives
a little fun and excitement?
She was doing them a favor.
And didn't the Bible say
love thy neighbor?



Hank Williams Done It This Way /
Joan Yeagley

Heard the other day
Jean Goff's takin' lead guitar lessons
Up to Granby.
Seems like her and
Tony Gumm an' ol' Dolph Hicks,
Manville Williams, Nadene and Mac Link
Are going to get the Hootenannys up again
On Big Sugar Saturday nights.
Don't know where they'll git a fiddler,
You was the onliest one in all McDonald
Could really pull a string.
Leastwise 'fore your hands got so swoll
You couldn't finger.
But even then, Hoss,
You sure could pick that gi'tar.

They laid you out real nice.
There was three preachers.
Your cousin, Gilbert's gospel group sang
And the Hinson's sent a guitar of yellow mums
Made us all feel better
Like them little fancy runs
You done on "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry."

When Cold Gathers The Woods Close/
Joan Yeagley

When cold gathers the woods close,
I look for the wanton signs
Of Bitterweest shinnying up tree trunks,
Vaulting fences, or
Leap-frogging boulders.
Its like walking these same woods,
My arms crushing June poppies.
Each berry a sunburst,
Hot through my skin
Like a girl's blush.
Winter comes:
This color draws from me a smile,
Warms the ends of my fingers.

Baptist Primitive—A Christmas Poem/
Joan Yeagley

Whenever I pass the house out on 76,
I slow down to read the sign
Old man Groft has nailed up
On top of his roof.
It's as big as signs that say "Cafe" or "Eats."
But I'm in a hurry
And goose the pick-up up to 50,
As fast as I dare go around the curve
Ahead of the curve in the dry snow.

In Anderson I mail the kid's present
And buy Chinese Checkers for Charlene's kids.
I loved Chinese Checkers—Wonder what
The marbles will sound like
Going up the hose of Charlene's vacuum sweeper?
The clerk says, "Shall I wrap it? It's free!"

The one-way Main street is a funnel
For the blowing snow I stand against
Waiting for the jam on the street to move,
Cars backing into the street from both sides,
Each blocking each
And the predictable honker.
A rancher in a fleece-lined jean jacket
Pulls a new red wagon
Piled with gift-wrapped packages
Out the door of Tatum's
And loads them on the bed of his truck.
The bed is already full of packages.
The magnetic sign on the truck door says,
"Bull Bedrick—Fence Building."
I see Bull cutting cross country over gravel roads
Riding the wind in his red pick-up,
Gift-wrapped packages falling off behind
Beside the mailboxes of this hill farm or
That one.

Heading home, the draft the truck makes
Sucks the snow under, then over
The fenders and hood.
This time I read Croft's sign.
"Beware! Just a little further down the road
You are going to meet Jesus Christ.
For He is coming!"
Thick smoke spills over the rim
Of the short brick chimney
And there are three chord of firewood
Split and stacked in the yard.

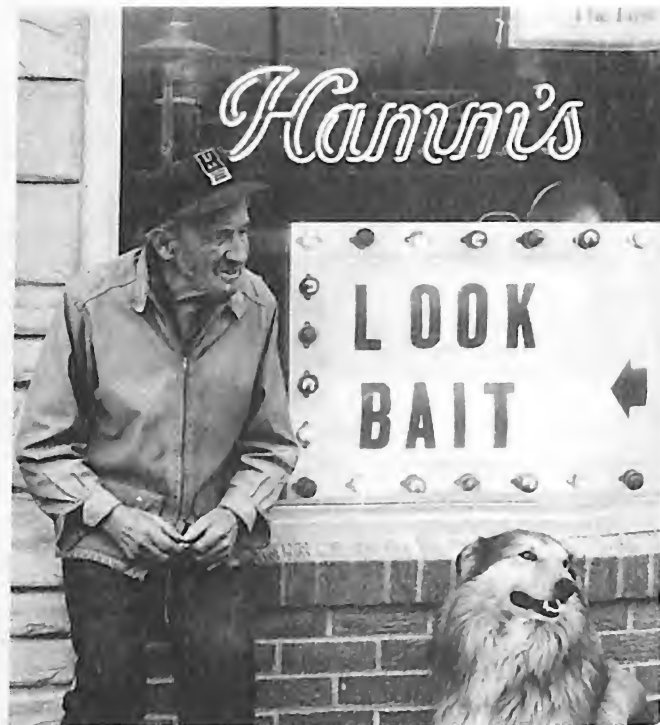
I don't believe in Hell
But in sudden Epiphany
As three red birds
Fly out of the Cedars.

Editing Poems for the Anthology /
lyn lifshin

they fall against my
house like cats lost
in a bad storm wind
shoves them toward my
bed and i reach out
in the middle of the
night all of them
are starved love me
i half expect acid
if i taste them and
who knows what on the
glue of the stamped
and self addressed
It's hard when i know
who wrote them to
lick the glue with
a no: they're
like ugly kittens
i cant quite load
into a sack or say
goodby to

The Candidate / lyn lifshin

moves in
like a bull
dozer uprooting
all the tulips
he's making a
move he moves so
fast he makes you
dizzy you can't tell
what he's doing
he changes fast
but his moves aren't
what they seem
like a fan that
seems to be still
he's cutting and
spinning try
to touch him and
you'll lose
more than your
finger he's
like the single
drawings you
flip thru stills
that seem to
move be connected
and doing what
they don't



not falling to dogs / Stephen Dunning

two boxer dogs
trained to a silent whistle
in the mouth of a man behind
that stone wall—no
in that shack
perfect place for a black
hating my white ass
for running his road in short pants
he has dogs, and they
have me, their paws splayed
flat, their heads
sliding up and down
like turtles at me
sweating, afraid to move
thinking
how i want to die
making love to my old friend
the one with the grace
to forgive my fears
making love in Kitchener or Medicine Bend
in a motel with a wise name
like Last Resort, a place with
thin towels, ashtrays with
insurance ads, and people we don't know
making love next door.
my friend and me close because i said
i love you, then
suddenly feeling the clutch at the heart
maybe smiling so my friend will know
it's ok
but not, please
falling out here to these dogs

Pigs on Pilgrimage/Lyn Coffin

The pilgrim pigs of Arenac are coming,
Rolling south on Interstate 75.
Sows and boars thrum to visions of Miami.
Pinker than roses are they, rounder-eyed
Than children—rosy magnitude of flesh, they
Come! They roll through Au Gres, salmon capital
Of Michigan, then Omer, where the Rifle
River bends, Standish with its mousy houses,
Pinconning with small churches, big yellow wheels
Of cheese . . . Rolling down the asphalt, their pristine
Flesh declares itself in parables, glows
Like rubies, like rosy erasers in
The gray hands of a school-teacherly dawn.
Their doxology swells: "We are the clean ones,
Baptized beside the Singing Bridge! Saginaw
Bay cannot distract us, we are anointed
By the sun!" South they roll, each hoof held steady
On casters: stainless steel and mother of pearl.

The Armored Girl/Lyn Coffin

Boxes within boxes, dolls within dolls,
Seeds in apples implicit with apples . . .
When I was pregnant, I carried within me
All the answers to my own questions.
It's like that giving birth to anything—

The proper myth would have to be Athena
Springing out of Zeus's head. But what a
Strange Caesarian, to have one's mind split
Into two like an apple by Hephaestus'
Axe, and only later allowed to mend!

It must have seemed to Zeus when he first
saw his
Daughter standing there—fully-grown
and gleaming,
Panoplied in silver—that he had
Somehow been tricked into becoming
A mother, that Hephaestus' shining
Axe had actually sired the armored girl.



***/Simon Perchik**

The stones must be small, gravel
darker than acorns, picked
to undo the ground, tossed
as to some hole
—Did you hear the crack?

Who remembers what I said, oaks
already through my shoes. It's enough
the pebbles are let loose.
What do I know
from minutes piling in this yard.

We all start in yards. In back.
In the darkness stacked against each star
something moves, taken in hand
and stone by stone there's a place
for another hand :buds
that go to work just held
just waiting, just there.

Vigil / Mark Vinz

The old woman prepares
another pot of coffee.
She will wait up again tonight
until the last citizen
is safely home,
until the last broken muffler
is weary of cruising.

Someone must do it, she says,
filling my cup to the highest ring.

She has friends. Up and down the block
small lamps burn toward morning,
rocking chairs speak of shadows
rising and falling
out in the almost empty streets.

HONKY-TONK/Jeff Worley

Della straddles the barstool, styrofoam
bunching like stormclouds.

She cracks open an egg
and sees the blank face of her husband.

No one offers her salt.
She likes the feel of her teeth going in.

When she hears Tammy Wynette confess,
her eyes fill up with clouds.

The jukebox, she thinks, is a tiny space station,
spinning into the distances of 2 a.m.:

The meadow, goldenrod, the river,
sunshine turned her knees liquid.

The bastard went after the morning paper
and just kept going

Hope Goes Whoosh!/James Hearst

We just could not believe our luck.
A For Sale sign on the house next door.
It's like seeing buds on the tulips
after a hard winter, I could hear
birds sing when I drove home through
traffic. What a day of jubilation.
For months we shaped our faces
into friendly beacons, smiled if it
killed us. All the while their kids
left junk all over our backyard,
he never touched the lawn mower
and let dandelion seeds spread
over the whole township, and God,
their damn radio blasting away
day and night. Will we celebrate!
When I met the guy coming home
I said (I hope) in a neighborly tone,
"We will be glad to help you move."
"Oh," he answered, "you didn't notice?
We've changed our minds, took down the sign."
Did you ever wonder how a balloon feels
when it bursts? That's our sky high
hopes stuck full of pins.

What Time Is It Anyway?/James Hearst

You can't win 'em all,
he said when he lost his job
as manager of a small factory
that made sleds and coaster wagons.
He said, our product does not seem
to be in demand and no one can
think of anything else we're
good for. Like the rest of us
he had bills to pay and a family
to support and at his age the
big companies weren't anxious
to interview him for a job.
He found work with the Park
Commission mowing grass in the
city parks. If he felt a put-down
he kept it to himself and paid
his taxes and renewed his credit
at the bank. But he asked himself,
Have I outlived my time? Am I
at fifty an anachronism?
It's hard to accept defeat
of sleds and coaster wagons
by a day of snack bars and
the instant replay.

Claim For Damages/James Hearst

"The man recovered from the bite,
the dog it was that died." This
may be the end of the ballad but
it is not the end of the story.
The dog's owner sued the man
bitten on the grounds that the dog
had the right to assume it was biting
healthy flesh and not a leg tainted
beyond a normal dog's immunity.
The jury found for the plaintiff
and awarded him a million and a half
dollars in damages. The award broke down
into these items, \$150.00 veterinary fee
and body disposal; \$500,000.00 for
lack of companionship and protection;
\$500,000.00 for mental anguish, worry
and loss of affection; \$400,000.00
for libelous and defamatory remarks
by the defendant about both dog and
master and for accusing them of a
relationship which did not in fact
exist; \$99,350.00 for the neglect
of the defendant to make
friendly overtures to the dog
and attempt to persuade him
not to bite. The defendant
appealed the verdict on the grounds
that in running away from the dog
he had no breath left to speak
kindly to it; that his pants and
sock were torn; that he was so upset
he could not resume conjugal relations
with his wife until the wound
healed; and the dog knowingly was
allowed to break the leash law.
The judge took the appeal under
advisement.

Today Is Now/James Hearst

It doesn't need headlines,
I see it, my age stamped on
the mirror each morning. So
that's the way it is and I go
to bed so I can get up or
get up so I can go to bed
with a day wedged between or
a night, habits I've acquired
through use and I don't ask why.
Deep, back in the mirror stare
the eyes of the young man
I used to be, who did other

things than I do now. All right,
let him, I am not going back
in memory and pick up after him.
Let him pay his own debts,
the girl he borrowed love from,
the parents he never paid back,
the friends he forgot to settle
with—the hell with him, he had
his chance. This is my time today
and I better make the most of it,
there may not be many more.

We Name Him/ *Dan Jaffe*

Turning in bed
we hear on our roof
a cat thumping across the shingles,
some shaggy tom
with bad teeth maybe
stalking a pigeon.
We've never seen him
but our ears feel his shadows
his claw grip
on the slender branches near our window.
Across the outside of our lives
he scratches, discomfiting as gravel.
Does he reach up
from the top of our chimney,
moonlight shining from his name-tag,
a yowl ready in his throat
if we brazen a light?
We name him:
Johnson, or Nixon or Reagan:
and turn over
back to our real dreams—
what we can deal with.

Standing Before a Lit Menorah/ *Dan Jaffe*

Like scrolls inscribed along the western wall,
These letters of His changing name
Set the oldest message on the night:

Not simple joy, nor simply ritual,
Not proof of innocence or shame,
But our hardest hopes alive in bristling light.

the towns of my poems/ *Jonathan Griffith*

The towns of my poems are small towns,
no drugstores, no Main;
the town drunk is not
the night watchman,
and the only avenue
is a bend of stars.
In the towns of my poems
children are put to bed by mommies and daddies
who kiss them and later turn out the light.
Afterwards, they dream of meadows.
Except the children who do not sleep.
They know a place where smiles
are holes of darkness, and it happens
if you close your eyes.
Something always gets you
if you let it,
and you will.

The Poet's Lament/ *Dan Jaffe* After Heffernan

My poems are selling
like very heavy hotcakes
in Pittsburg, Kansas.

Czeslaw Milosz/ *Dan Jaffe*

He wriggled out of power
into exile, a shadow
behind a typewriter,
a poet whispering
in the wrong language.

Around him a literary carnival
swirled, barkers
and sword swallowers, leapers
diverting the cameras,
promises and advertisements,
the acrobatics of fame
along high wires strung with neon.


As he grew older
professing his own truths,
afloat in his own language,
somehow they found him.
But he feared the "pitfalls of fame,"
continued to savor
the strange syllables of his poems.

Still Life/ *Jonathan Griffith*

When my neighbor set up
her chopping block,
I was surprised by nothing
except the mindless lunge
into the yard.
She wiped her bloodied hands
on her apron. Knowing too late,
the head convulsed
then stilled
to a small bright coin.
I felt myself poised
over something
though I had swallowed my voice.
One imagines the other world
to be soundless,
glass lifted from a pool.
Here, she said,
pressing a nickel's image
into my palm.
Reaching for another bird,
she stepped into her own Brueghel.

Voices From the Interior

BY ROBERT STEWART



Stanley E. Banks
Walter Barga
Jim Barnes
Conger Beasley, Jr.
Albert Bellg
Jim Bogan
Shirley Wilson Bossert
Louis Daniel Brodsky
Arthur R. Brown
Michael Castro
William Childress
Donald Drummond
Bruce Eastman
Jon Eastman
Greg Field
Crystal Maclean Field
Donald Finkel
Dennis Finnell
Paul Gianoli
Charles Guenther
George Gurley
Pamela White Hadas
Jack Heflin
Frank Higgins
Jim Howard
Dan Jaffe
Robert Killoren
John Knoepfle
Larry Levis
Thomas McAfee
Jerred Metz
Virginia Scott Miner
John N. Morris
Howard Nemerov
David Perkins
Michael Pfeifer
Rush Rankin
David Ray
Judy Ray
Judith Root
Howard Schwartz
Peter Simpson
Robert Slater
Mbembe Milton Smith
Marcia Southwick
Robert Stewart
Dorothy Brown Thompson
William Trowbridge
Leslie Ullman
Constance Urdang
Maryfrances Wagner
Eugene Warren
Joan Yeagley

The piece that follows is an edited introduction to Robert Stewart's anthology VOICES FROM THE INTERIOR: FIFTY MISSOURI POETS just published by BkMk Press (College of Arts and Sciences, University of Missouri, Kansas City 64110, \$6.50).

It's easy to become defensive about poetry produced in Missouri—many critics have, through necessity almost. In fact, Missouri seems traditionally to be a place great poets come from: Marianne Moore left Kirkwood for New York, Sara Teasdale left St. Louis for New York; Langston Hughes left Joplin for Harlem and other places. And, after reading the WASTELAND, Ezra Pound is reported to have complimented T. S. Eliot: "You've come a long way from Missouri."

Other examples can be added. The pressure for writers to leave the Midwest has always been strong, and still continues. When John Ciardi left his teaching post at the University of Kansas City, he left hoping to find a "group" of writers that did not exist in Kansas City in the 1940s. But times have changed. There has been a renewed interest in writing poetry here as in the rest of the nation during the past two decades. Even more important, Midwest poetry has simultaneously developed a strong character of its own. Perhaps there's an advantage in being away from the traditional literary centers. It has muted the tendency toward chronic introspection, neo-Romantic self-pitying, and deliberate obscurity.

It has emphasized that quality for which people have, traditionally, returned to art: pleasure. Readers recognize in poetry elements of their own lives. The poems also provide perceptions rich with broader implications, irony and harmony. The work may be tragic and joyous, distasteful or reassuring. It may deal with dope pushers or "the studs of McDonald County," a lost love or a prairie twister, but it is alive with the diction and imagery of the region. It invites the reader in.

College students in a class I once visited to talk about poetry were in some way justified in asking why, in a course entitled "contemporary trends," they were discussing poetry at all. I realized from the question how much the poetry that has dominated the textbooks and magazines on the national scene has put off rather than attracted its audience. In the same way, it has become quite safe for nationally syndicated columnist James J. Kilpatrick to refer to such

writing as "ga ga poetry." His sweeping generalization was inaccurate to say the least, but it went almost totally unchallenged.

I approached the editing of this anthology, then, with a certain trepidation. What I discovered, however, was a poetry that is characterized by a fidelity to coherent, recognizable experience. It tends to the vernacular, and a renewed concern for a meaningful audience. In making my selections I looked for poems that would help dispell the popular view that poets are, by nature, aloof and out of touch. I looked for poems that would approach what Sartre called *engage*. I kept in mind what Robert Frost said in an interview, that "the capacity for making contact is a tremendous challenge to literature."

Contact. That's the ingredient too often missing. One critic, Brendan Galvin, in describing the commonly available surreal or narcissistic poem, says it's like "hearing a drunken stranger talking to himself in a bar mirror late at night, and about someone we have never met." This is not to say that surreal or even confessional poetry is not written in Missouri. Of course it is. Nor is it to say that such poetry cannot be great art. But it is to say that most Missouri poets would agree with French Philosopher Simone Weil who said that the greatest poetry is written about the lives of people who do not write poetry.

A journalism teacher once told me that people would rather read about a dog fight down the street than a war across the ocean: the dog fight is closer. And while poetry is not journalism, those things that are close to people—in diction, tone or subject—often create the most effective poetry. The early Greeks knew this. For them, poetry was a primary means of transmitting information about their world. Boundary disputes were sometimes settled by referring to Homer! Contact.

In a small way, I witnessed a change in how many of the younger poets of this area perceive their art. For several years I directed the Kansas City Poetry series, which sponsored monthly readings in bookstores and taverns. A major objective was to get poetry out before the public—or, more specifically, to get poets out before the public. Their writing changed. The local reading series made poets feel immediately responsible for their words and created in them the need to reach the people they faced. It contributed to the growing sense of regionalism among poets. Younger poets especially began to change. They eliminated semantic gymnastics and

"I looked for poems that would help dispell the popular views that poets, are by nature, aloof and out of touch. . . . I kept in mind what Robert Frost said in an interview, that 'the capacity for making contact is a tremendous challenge to literature.'"

word-games, they provided more images. They made an objective, sympathetic attempt to discover the truths inherent in our culture, as they are found.

As Walt Whitman once said, "To have great poets there must be great audiences." Many of the poets I have known have worked to develop that audience in Missouri. In doing so, they have helped shape the "group" that John Ciardi missed during the 1940s. That concern for audience through public performance, print, or broadcast media, has helped define the regional character of much Midwestern poetry.

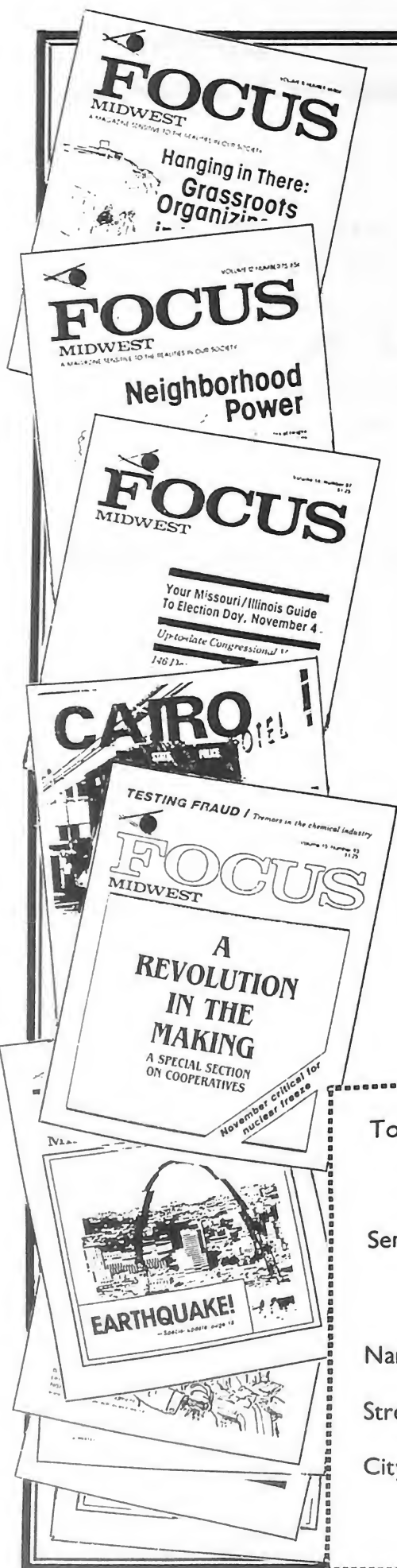
Perhaps it is a comment on ourselves and on our culture that despite widespread efforts some of us turn, occasionally, to gimmicks to gather larger support. A few years ago after the artist Cristo had been given the reported sum of \$45,000.00 to cover the walkways of Loose Park in Kansas City with gold cloth, I wrote a letter to *The Kansas City Star* as a spoof: it proposed that for an equal amount of money we could put some of the best poets in the country in every tree in Loose Park. Park patrons could ring a small bell on a lower branch and the poet would shimmy down the trunk, poem between his teeth, and read a poem. More physically fit poets, the letter went on, could come down to recite poetry as they ran along side joggers; and, if the joggers didn't like the poem, they could tell the poet to get back in his tree (it's important, now and then, to tell artists to get back in their trees).

Surprisingly, a lot of people liked the idea. It was mentioned in several news-

paper article discussing the arts in Kansas City. So, not long ago, after failing to secure funds for a conventional poetry reading series, some of us decided to actually propose a "Poets In The Trees" Festival. We immediately received support from student groups and we were promised even more substantial funding from the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department, complete with rope ladders, pillows and strolling minstrels.

Everyone loved the gimmick. The politician-poet, Eugene McCarthy signed up to sit in a tree. *The Washington Post* ran the headline POETS AT THE FOLLGERS AND IN THE TREES on the front page of its Arts section. A reporter promised to come to Kansas City to cover the event. Sudden government cutbacks, however, postponed the project.

We hope this anthology will attract many people who would otherwise have no introduction to Missouri poets so deserving of attention. The anthology also acts as a kind of gathering place for poets themselves—a chance to come together in print, to bounce off one another—a convention of poets, where ideas and feelings can be examined and tested. And the anthology, I hope, is an historical document. It has tried not only to be reasonably comprehensive but to present the current group of poets in a structured way—to give readers and scholars some sense of who has accomplished what. And, finally, and more importantly, it is for fun, in the sense that genuine communication and discoveries excite and stimulate our sense of community and human feeling.



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Was it a whitewash?

BY JUDITH AND MARK MILLER

“We work—I don’t want to say closely with federal agents, but we were reciprocal. We give them information, they give us information on numerous occasions.”

On November 8, 1982, the largest private detective agency in Missouri became the first defendant in the nation to plead guilty to federal criminal charges of illegally obtaining credit information about people from the data bank of a commercial credit bureau.

Among the agency’s clients were not only private companies but also public institutions, such as the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Their involvement raises questions which have been unanswered so far.

The detective agency, Easterling and Steinmetz, pled guilty to 15 of 20 federal counts of violating the Fair Credit Reporting Act, a federal law instituted in 1971. The other five counts were dropped in exchange for the guilty plea. The 15 counts carried a maximum fine of \$75,000 and possible prison term up to 15 years; however, the Federal judge who sentenced the detectives on December 11, 1982, imposed no prison time and suspended all but \$5,000 of the fine, citing as his reason the fact that the agency had run up legal fees of over \$80,000 defending itself. The judge also placed the firm on five years probation and warned that any further violation of the Fair Credit law would result in imposition of the total fine.

The case started with a consumer complaint to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 1976. The FTC and FBI spent 2½ years investigating Easterling and Steinmetz, then put their findings before a Federal grand jury which, in February 1982, handed down indictments. The trial took place in August 1982 in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, located in St. Louis. It ended in a hung jury. As a retrial of the case began in November 1982, the defendants entered guilty pleas.

Court records filed by the detective agency contend that both their clients and the credit bureau knew that the detectives were getting hold of credit information. According to the detective agency, “At no time was either the identity or function of Easterling and Steinmetz or the purpose for which the (credit) information was requested ever falsely represented to anyone, including the Credit Bureau or to the clients of Easterling and Steinmetz.”

“In fact,” the record continued,

“Easterling and Steinmetz openly and candidly advised their clients, including large corporations, insurance companies, and prominent law firms in the (St. Louis) community, that their investigations included the obtaining of credit information;” despite this, the detectives maintained, “at no time did anyone ever advise Easterling and Steinmetz that they had done anything wrong by acquiring the (credit) information.”

Nevertheless, neither the Credit Bureau nor any of the detective agency’s clients were indicted or accused of being accessories by Federal prosecutors. Explained Robert Donlan, one of two Justice Department attorneys who came from Washington to St. Louis to handle the prosecution, “We questioned people at the Credit Bureau and some of the detective agency’s clients and became convinced that they did not know that credit information the detective agency mailed them had been obtained under false pretenses;” consequently, he went on, “the credit bureau and clients were not accused of any wrongdoing.”

At the trial, Joe A. Steinmetz, president of the detective firm, made the startling revelation that not all his clients came from the private sector. He claimed his company also ran commercial credit checks on people for the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and several other public agencies.

As Steinmetz put it, “We work—I don’t want to say closely with federal agents, but we were reciprocal. We give them information, they give us information on numerous occasions.”

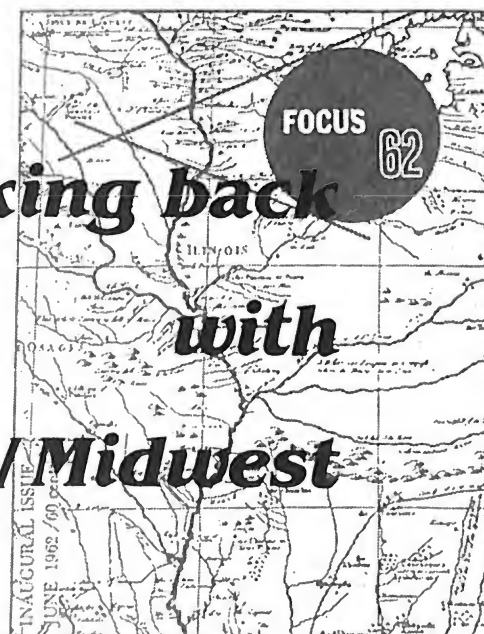
With the tremendous investigative resources and subpoena powers of the FBI and U.S. Justice Department, it would seem that they would have no need for a private detective firm that has no policemen among its employees nor any legal power to investigate and take action against criminal behavior; but, as Steinmetz, a former insurance adjuster who never worked in law enforcement, explained, “The FBI came to us on one occasion and said, ‘fellows, we don’t want our name to show up on this guy’s credit check. Would you do it for us?’ Well, when the FBI asks you to do something it’s a favor, sure, we do it. . . . They (the FBI) didn’t want their account number to show up that they made an inquiry on that party’s record.” ■

Looking forward with The St. Louis Journalism Review



By Charles L. Klotzer

Looking back with FOCUS / Midwest



The media are powerful. Their influence is as pervasive as that of top political or business leaders. Indeed, the media define influence and often join forces with particular interests which may or may not serve the general public. But while politicians must always keep the electorate in mind and business leaders their stockholders, who calls the media to account for their treatment of news?

Everything written and published reflects the limitations of writers and editors. The same holds true for the spoken word. The journalistic euphemism for this sort of bias is "news judgment." Granted that all newspapers and all radio and television stations tell the truth as they understand it, all media may justifiably be criticized if they insist that their brand of truth is *the* truth, that they have presented all there is to present, that they have been objective.

No matter how honestly and fairly reporters and editors intend to present the news, it always reflects, inevitably so, a part of the whole. It must be selective, therefore, limited and biased.

This condition should impel readers to draw upon many sources of information. But few do. An independent guardian is needed, therefore, one which observes the media, comments and criticizes when necessary and helps raise the consciousness of all media personnel.

No press is as much scrutinized as the American. During the last twenty years ombudsmen have become an accepted phenomena of some major newspapers. Even one major television network broadcasts evaluations of their news programs.

While the degree of press criticism has increased sharply in recent years, the first regular media criticism dates back to *In Fact* founded in 1940 by George Seldes. (*) *In Fact* folded after ten years, the victim of red-baiting, blacklisting, unionization, and high expenses.

The *Columbia Journalism Review*, founded in 1961, is the precursor of the modern review. But its affiliation with a school of journalism places it in a different genre than the later reviews staffed by working journalists.

The idea of the local journalism review originated in Chicago. Following

the riot in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel during the 1968 Democratic national convention, the outrages committed by the Chicago police, the clubbing of students and journalists and, most important, the misrepresentations by the Chicago press, a group of Chicago journalists brought out the *Chicago Journalism Review*. Within two years, the *St. Louis Journalism Review* and seven others appeared.

"Working journalists stepped out of the closet," concludes Claude-Jean Bertrand, "they asked to be treated not as salaried scribblers, but as professionals . . . journalism reviews were not so much a factor as an indicator of change."

The idea spread throughout the United States. Ultimately, about 25 such local reviews were published. (Many others were planned but never made it to the printer.) But the unrelenting demands on volunteers and grossly underpaid staffers gradually sapped their commitment and dedication. Within another two years, most reviews disappeared. By 1974 only four remained. Today, the *St. Louis Journalism Review* is the sole sur-

In the late 1950s, having survived Joe McCarthy but not yet tainted by Vietnam, America woke up, took a deep breath, and seemed ripe to plunge into social reform. The shortcomings of living up to our Bill of Rights in the Midwest or elsewhere were rarely denied but too often rationalized if not ignored.

An independent magazine, carefully maintaining a regional perspective, suggested itself as an appropriate vehicle to participate in this experiment of revitalizing America. Moreover, aside from a few specialized poetry and literary publications, the Midwest seemed to lack a well-rounded magazine to address cultural and literary issues.

Thus, the task seemed rather simple. A publication that would speak out on sociopolitical issues of the day as well as be hospitable to cultural and literary expressions should be able "to fill a void" (as is the common claim of most budding publishers) within a limited area of circulation.

This restriction in coverage was crucial to the idea of *FOCUS/Midwest*. As the name implied, the hope was to cover the midwestern states beginning with Missouri and Illinois.

* * *

The survival rate of outspoken publications of limited appeal is a reflection of the sociopolitical mood of the times as well as the know-how of its publisher—taking for granted that financial resources are available to see it through its birthpains and infancy. These elements largely determine the effectiveness of

marketing and the pertinence of content.

But to ask an editor/publisher to discuss his product is akin to inviting a political candidate to evaluate his past performance. His or her stance will alternate between humble pretentiousness and grandiosity, neither of which is an appealing virtue.

To maintain a minimum amount of distance, this version of the 21 years of *FOCUS/Midwest* will be written in the third person. It may not fool anyone but this writer, but it will make his task easier.

* * *

The publisher was in the midst of washing the dishes when he turned to his wife, Rose, and asked: "What do you think about a midwestern magazine without taboos?" He asked the same question of others for the next two years.

More than now, it was taken for granted that small magazines could not be profitably sustained. Computerized inexpensive typesetting had not yet arrived. Everyone could recall more publications which had folded than succeeded.

The question of "why" bothered the publisher. He kept asking the same question of publishers and others in the major cities of the Midwest as well as Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., and other cities. In his quest, he discovered that the best sources were publishers of defunct magazines. Each was eager to justify and reveal how his or her particular idea had fared in the marketplace.

The number of interviews mounted. Indeed, after many hundreds of them,

the count was lost.

Several simple conclusions emerged which, so it seemed at the time, would enhance the probability of survival:

(a) The age of the mass print media was phasing out. By selecting a slice of a market, a publication should be able to offer in-depth coverage of particular interest to that segment. Such a local special-interest publication of concentrated information should be able to compete with dailies, which are akin to supermarkets where readers have to shop around to find what they like, as well as with national magazines whose broad coverage could not involve local readers as effectively; (b) sufficient capital must be raised to assure publishing and (even more expensive) marketing for at least one year; (c) expenses must be kept to a minimum by working only with part-time office and editorial help and by working out of one's home; (d) the credibility and quality of the product would have to overcome any lack of broad appeal; and (e) circulation income would have to support a limited budget since the direction of *FOCUS/Midwest* would not entice advertisers to support the magazine.

After 21 years, the first three conclusions (specialization, capital, low budget) still hold for small magazines. The fourth premise (quality) can rarely be credibly judged by an involved publisher. But the fifth assumption—that circulation alone could sustain the publication—is absolutely wrong *unless* the publication has a unique slice of the market in which subscribers are willing

vivor of this crop of local media critics.

Yet, the journalism reviews were immensely successful. They made media criticism credible. In their wake, city and neighborhood publications, alternative and community media, and, indeed, the mass media themselves have accepted media evaluation as one of their functions.

By January 1984, *SJR* has published fifty-seven issues. It has done so with the help of about 40 to 50 journalists representing the print and broadcast media in the metropolitan St. Louis area. (Some who have left this area have remained faithful and energetic collaborators.) They act as a kind of watchdog eager to improve, but loyal to the media for which they work. Reporters who cooperate with *SJR* accept an ethical responsibility to media consumers which equals their expected obligation to media owners, without ever abandoning their primary professional obligation to the mass media for which they work.

News is what the media say it is. Few will argue with this contention today. But when some St. Louis journalists dared suggest in the early seventies that

reporting is always subjective, the smell of treason hung heavy over their heads.

When reporters speak of media shortcomings, they do not mean simple factual errors or withholding of news. Of course, they wince at misrepresentations and are outraged at willful distortions. But their principal complaint concerns the failure of media to reflect contemporary forces and changing needs and to act accordingly.

To remain sensitive to such changes, *SJR* keeps its own policies simple and flexible. In its first issue, *SJR* published its operating decisions which have largely remained the same:

- Membership for the editorial board is essentially by self-appointment of working journalists to avoid dominance by an in-group,
- board meetings—which are off the record—are open to all members of the working press who wish to support the Review,
- ideas and articles are solicited from all members of the working press,
- articles are accepted from persons not directly affiliated with the print or broadcast media,

- rebuttals will be published from persons or publications criticized in *SJR*,

- board co-responsibility—though not necessarily agreement—for all articles appearing in *SJR* (board members may ask their names be omitted from the masthead of any issue).

Gradually, reporters who were too satisfied, too cynical, or too scared to lend any assistance, realized that the *SJR* was here to stay. Although such comments as “reporters should not bite the hand that feeds them” is still heard, by and large journalists not only recognize the validity of *SJR* but are also fully cooperating with *SJR* reporters.

As years went by, the *SJR* was recognized as a vehicle available to reporters and citizens that was advertiser-insensitive. Moreover, the *SJR* was the only publication that offered a working journalist an environment where he/she was evaluated by peers on an equal basis. Today’s “judges” may become tomorrow’s “target.”

It is instructive to review some of the difficulties which Bertrand cites as hav-

to pay much more than a competitive newsstand price. In the magazine market, advertising is essential.

More should be said about specialization and *FOCUS/Midwest*. The essence of the idea is valid but was not carried far enough. The Midwest in *FOCUS/Midwest* promised wider coverage. Headquartered in St. Louis, it was only natural to cover initially Kansas City and Chicago as well as happenings throughout Missouri and Illinois. The intent was to break even and then extend coverage to other midwestern states such as Indiana, Wisconsin, Kansas, etc. But the region to be covered was actually larger than many European states. It did not take long to realize that to introduce the magazine in several states would not be possible with a limited budget, a limited number of pages, and a limited staff. Financial growth in the Missouri-Illinois region became a prerequisite.

The growth of *FOCUS/Midwest* would have been greatly facilitated if it had been established in name and purpose as *FOCUS/Missouri* or even *FOCUS/St. Louis*. Once firmly accepted, it could then have spun off separate publications such as *FOCUS/Illinois* or *FOCUS/Chicago*. Indeed, in later years, splitting up *FOCUS/Midwest* was seriously considered but abandoned because that too would require additional funding.

* * *

A corporation was formed to raise the required capital. Investors were told that they would most likely never receive any dividends and they would have nothing

to say about the editorial and publishing policies. By early 1962, close to 100 investors in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Chicago joined in the fray—a distinguished list of professional and business persons who reflected the spirit of the 1960s in this commitment.¹

The vagaries of the stock market upset initial projections. After the irrevocable order to print was given for the first issue in May 1961, the stock market sharply dropped. (The two events are not related.) Only about 25 percent of the stock pledges were redeemed. From the beginning, therefore, the publisher had to add fundraising to his responsibilities. Ironically, exactly the type of activity—siphoning off of energies—which he had tried to avoid by his prior planning.

FOCUS/Midwest was conceived in the belief that the Midwest would provide an adequate number of subscribers for a bold, absolutely independent magazine dealing with the harsh, and often ugly, issues of contemporary society.

This was the assumption. But *FOCUS/Midwest* never broke even. While the fight for survival was never mentioned in the magazine itself, from 1962 to 1968 it was kept alive by the sale of additional stock to supporters, contributions and loans, and the volunteer efforts by many writers and editors.²

For a time, friends of the magazine made valiant attempts, with some success, to promote the magazine. This includes “The Associates of *F/M*,” co-chaired by Edna Gellborn, Chester Stovall, Leon Despress, Homer Wads-

worth, and others.

On another occasion, an exclusive columnist in *FOCUS/Midwest*, then Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, agreed to accept an award at which Newton Minow would be the toastmaster and which would be co-chaired by Adlai E. Stevenson III and Philip Klutznick. A date was set up—but President Johnson decided to send his vice president on an overseas trip. Later the Vietnam War was intensified, splitting the liberal community and making Vice President Humphrey’s participation of doubtful value. The affair was never held.

In 1968, the first of the cold typesetting systems arrived in St. Louis. *FOCUS/Midwest* was the fourth to have one installed. Not only did it drastically cut typesetting expenses, but it provided a source of income.

It soon became unnecessary to seek additional support; it was now possible to finance the deficit in-house. The typesetting service soon expanded into a total professional production service, including design, paste-up, film work; in short, every pre-press phase. Clients throughout the country, from Little, Brown & Co. in Boston to *DECOR* magazine in St. Louis, unknowingly played a crucial role in keeping *FOCUS/Midwest* and another publication, the *St. Louis Journalism Review*, alive since then.

(Early in 1970, the emergence of a spirit of reform within the news profession intrigued the publisher. Following the advent of the *Chicago Journalism Review*, reporters from various St. Louis print and broadcast media met repeated-

ing led to the demise of so many reviews, and how *SJR* dealt with these problems.

Firstly, reviews published primarily for the journalistic community were faced with a very small market. Journalists are few in number. *SJR* overcame this handicap by publishing a journal not only for the professional journalists but also for the community at large. It has established a broad following among the educated public, business, professional, and public leaders. Its coverage includes the press, radio, TV, cable, and is currently expanding into public relations and advertising.

A second difficulty, says Bernard, is the "paranoia of publishers, editors and (many) reporters. Their allergy to criticism is such that reviews are refused any kind of publicity and remain unknown to the general public." During its more than 13 years of publishing, the *St. Louis* dailies have followed a consistent policy of never mentioning *SJR* in its news reports no matter what breaking story the *SJR* may offer for release. (One or two personnel notes were the only exception.) Radio and television have been more receptive and several

have featured *SJR* from time to time.

When a leader of the Reagan forces at the 1980 Republican National Convention recently criticized the administration for its attempted dismantling of FOI laws in *SJR*, the *Los Angeles Times* made it its lead editorial but not a word appeared in the *St. Louis* media.

A third problem derived from an internal flaw, contends Bertrand. Reviews were organized by reporters with little experience. Their idealism and ardor were soon tested by setbacks, indifference, and hostility as well as mounting expenses. Sooner or later they turned over the task to reporters who had neither the zeal nor the skill to carry on the burden.

The *SJR* avoided these difficulties by separating the business and financial operations from the editorial operations. The publisher/editor was the link between these two aspects, functioning in both areas. Working reporters were only asked to assist in the writing, editing, and conceptualization of the review.

Media topics covered in the review range from "insider" news such as personnel changes among *St. Louis* journal-



ists, to evaluations of news articles, to reports of censorship around the globe.

A brief recital of some articles describes best the scope of issues covered:

1970—The joint operating agreement between the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*—kept a secret by the *St. Louis* media—revealed in the inaugural issue . . . a review of coverage of *CORE* boycott of Anheuser-Busch for their lack of minority hiring . . .

1971—Media fails to investigate United Fund in face of internal critical report . . . historical study of *William Marion Reedy*, publisher of the *St.*

ly to plan and produce the *St. Louis Journalism Review*, whose inaugural issue was published in September 1970.)

For the past 13 years, then, the publishing team divided its energies between *FOCUS/Midwest*, the *St. Louis Journalism Review*, and the typesetting operation.

The mounting pressures of such multiple obligations have worked to the disadvantage of *FOCUS/Midwest*. Readers react enthusiastically to incisive, investigative pieces offering new information or interpretations of current events. They also value, but put aside for later reading, reflective, in-depth studies of a more academic nature. *FOCUS/Midwest* began to rely more and more upon the latter category. Most academicians, for example, having difficulties in getting their material published, usually have assembled excellent material which easily could be made palatable for a general but sophisticated reading public. In the long run, their contributions were of equal if not greater value than the topical exposes. Unfortunately, they do not make for growth in circulation.

Except for haphazard reporting in the daily press, no source in either state provided year-round records on key votes. As a result, *FOCUS/Midwest* reported on voting records and other legislative happenings in Missouri and Illinois since its first issue. These "voting records" have remained very popular with politicians, students, and librarians over the years.

It must also be admitted at this time that *FOCUS/Midwest* leads a double

life. Few are the issues which have not featured at least one page of poetry. The magazine has had only three poetry editors in its 21 years. The poetry section was first edited by Webster Schott, later by Donald Finkel, and currently by Dan Jaffe. In the early years, Harry T. Moore served as literary editor. Thanks to their efforts, *FOCUS/Midwest* enjoys a high reputation of its own among poets and writers throughout the country. Among the many poems published was one of the last ones by William Carlos Williams. Some of them, such as New York Times book critic Conrad Kitcherbocker and James T. Farrell, had their first poetry published in *Focus/Midwest*. Distinguished writers from throughout the country appeared in the magazine. Among them James Purdy, Constance Urdang, Lewis Turco, D. M. Pettinella, Winfield Townley Scott, William Stafford, Paul Engle, John Hollander, Edward Field, Ralph Pomeroy, Donald Drummond, John Unterecker, important authors all.

Focus/Midwest brought Knute Skinner, Dave Pearson Etter, Lynne Lawner, S. K. Oberbeck, Mark M. Perlberg, Charles Guenther, Thomas McAfee, John Knoepfle, Robert Bly, Howard Schwartz, Ralph Mills, Jr., Michael Paul Novak, Simon Perchik, Peter L. Simpson, Jim Bogan, Robert Killoren, Virginia Scott Miner, and many others which limits of space make it impossible to enumerate here.

Poetry? To what purpose? To attempt for a few minutes to alert the sensibilities and raise the possibility of other alterna-

tives. We believe the reading of poetry makes for a fuller life.

Has the cost in effort, time, and money been worth it? To our knowledge not one subscription has been gained. Our poetry often seemed to drop into a bottomless well.

We have published because, looking at the mountain, we believe something needs to be done about it. Boris Pasternak called poetry "the birth pangs of the new in the world." Giving voice to such birth pangs and other uncommon sounds is what this magazine was all about.

The impact of *FOCUS/Midwest* cannot be measured without considering the ripple effect of reprints which appeared throughout the country. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, at least during the magazine's first 10 years, reprinted scores of articles in its "Mirror of Public Opinion," and on numerous occasions commented editorially on topics raised by *FOCUS/Midwest*. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and many other national and hundreds of smaller publications reported on and reprinted items.

A brief journey, a sort of hopscotching through this bit of history, may tell the real story of *FOCUS/Midwest*.

1962—Advocacy of federal support of the arts by Arthur Goldberg . . . an Illinois public welfare worker dismissed after the late Harry Barnard reports on his attempt to induce a welfare recipient to "move on" to the East or back to the South . . . first public presentation by Irving Dilliard of the case of George

Louis Mirror . . . *Post* reporter spies for police . . .

1972—Warning: cable will become the most revolutionary innovation since TV . . . Payola for reporters . . .

1973—*Veiled Prophet* unveiled by *SJR* . . . Plagiarism is mark of broadcast journalism . . .

1974—St. Louis newspapers kill measure to bar utility advertising at consumer expense . . .

1975—Women charge sex bias at *Post* . . . Former employee charges *Globe* with favoritism . . .

1976—Media ignore radioactive waste news . . . Kids' TV commercial tempt "sweet tooth" every two minutes . . . News of racial sport fracas in Chicago suppressed in St. Louis . . . Crimes given uneven coverage . . .

1977—The comic strip the *Post* censored . . . *Globe* hiring, editing policies questioned . . . ten "best censored" stories of 1976 (since then this survey has been published annually in *SJR*) . . .

1978—KTVI, *Globe* ignore bias study . . . FBI memos reveal ties with former publisher of *Argus* . . . St. Louis readers left in dark on KSD radio

swap . . .

1979—Pulitzer, Newhouse share profits in new pact . . . Is St. Louis getting the full nuclear story? . . . *Post* silent on KSD-TV tax abatement . . . Missouri Airwaves: The looting of a resource . . .

1980—Tremors in Pulitzer Dynasty . . . Inside the Pulitzer Prices . . . *Globe* story fixing behind ticket fixing . . . Secret state study cites 10 St. Louis and 5 Kansas City stations for sex and race discrimination . . .

1981—Behind the Eagleton controversy . . . TV News: Fact or Fiction? . . . KSD takeover by Gannett leaves scores unemployed . . . *Globe* kills radioactive waste story . . . Cemrel story ignored . . . The three faces of El Salvadore . . . Ratings anxiety turns local TV news into circus . . . Bias seeps into coverage of Civic Center fight . . . Travel junketing newspaper style . . . Boosterism goes wild on VP Fair . . .

1982—KMOX-TV, radio suffer ad boycott . . . KWMU in turmoil . . . Politics decide textbook selection . . . Dailies asleep on Danforth's voting record . . . How tarnished are the (Uni-

versity of Missouri) journalism awards? . . . The media and the sales tax campaign . . . Politics boil over when Governor, Mayor say no to *Globe* publisher . . . Serra sculpture pet project of Pulitzer's? . . .

1983—The Miss Universe Madness . . . The *St. Louis Globe Democrat*: a 20-page special section detailing the history of the *Post-Globe* joint operating agency and an examination of various claims by Newhouse's Herald Co. and the Pulitzer Publishing Co. . . . an analysis of Central American coverage . . .

1984—The sale of the *Globe* to Debra and Jeffrey Gluck . . . Will Gluck succeed? . . . A comparison of British and American coverage of events in Grenada . . .

Bertrand astutely points out, "Few American journalists would seek democratization of the news media by an intervention of the government, however strongly the might resent the debasement of the press by private business. The alternative was to do it themselves and the means came naturally—a counter press."

Anastaplo, later a law professor, who was never admitted to the Illinois Bar because he refused to divulge his political and religious beliefs . . .

1963—A report on unequal apportionment of legislative districts in Missouri by Irving Achtenberg is followed up by his lawsuit (later combined with Paul Preisler's) which results in the U.S. Supreme Court's one-person-one-vote decision . . . when the Chicago Art Institute used the income from an 11-million dollar sculpture fund for purposes other than sculpture, an article moved several Chicago aldermen and the Illinois Attorney General to pressure the Institute to change its policies . . . St. Louis City Hall and St. Louis CORE totally ignore black community needs in the agreement to end the Bi-State Transit Bus boycott . . . appeal to former President Truman, St. Louis mayor, and others to resign from the Missouri Athletic Club and other discriminatory institutions picked up by wire services and national press. *Newsweek* queried Truman if he would follow suit. His answer? "You cannot solve social problems by force." . . . a Kennedy memorial issue.

1964—Key German diplomats are transferred out of Chicago after revelation that they tried to influence American presidential elections in favor of Senator Barry Goldwater . . . roster of right-wing organizations in the Missouri and Illinois region . . .

1965—Herbert I. Schiller reveals how American children are exposed to hucksterism in commercial school publications. He singles out Scholastic Maga-

zines as the worst offenders for implying that cosmetics and militarism are representative of the highest moral and spiritual values . . . Raymond E. Callahan takes Missouri's leadership to task for energetically moving "to build a great arch, a new sports stadium and plush highrise apartments . . . While in the heart of the city are thousands who . . . are growing up poorly educated and vocationally unskilled." He warned that these young men will not "accept their fate like sheep" . . . When the Chicago press, the *New York Times*, and other publications were shown to have been caught in an elaborate hoax engineered by Motorola in the famous Myart-FEPC case, unknown parties in Chicago bought up all available issues of *FOCUS/Midwest*; in turn, Mike Royko devoted a column to this curious chain of events . . . The Missouri Commissioner of Education was charged with tolerating wholesale law violations for the past 10 years and publicly misrepresenting that Missouri's school districts are integrated in compliance with the law . . . a Stevenson memorial issue.

1966—Schiller warns that space communication via satellites is in the hands of the Pentagon rather than the Department of State. Thus, unrest anywhere will be interpreted first by the Pentagon command and not by civilians, at least in the first few hours when often irrevocable decisions are made . . .

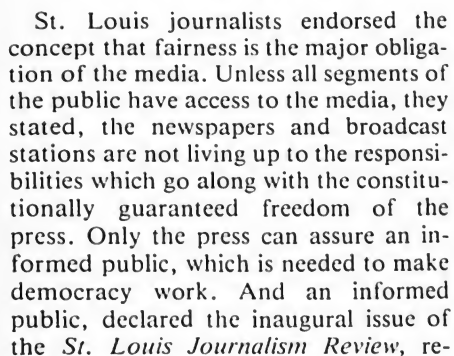
1967—Repeated warnings of deficiencies and repressive policies at Lincoln University were ignored until the cam-

pus erupted in riot . . . more warnings on Bi-State negotiations because of the dominance of the Illinois Air Pollution Board by industry . . . Hans S. Falck advocates abolishing domestic philanthropies which are as antiquated as voluntary control of air pollution; services are a right and "topping" the United Way goal is the height of irony . . . another early warning that Chicago police assume a political and repressive role . . .

1968—Participating in a study of performing arts in Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota that involved disadvantaged youth and how to reach them . . . study of policy departments in scores of Illinois/Missouri cities—includes time bomb warning in Kansas City by Sidney L. Willens . . . analysis by John M. Swomley, Jr. that Kansas City police action turned memorial marches into civic disturbances . . . St. Louis University Club drops all racial qualifications after editorial challenge. (Missouri Athletic Club drops its restrictive racial policies, five years after *FOCUS/Midwest* fired its opening salvo) . . . a 64-page issue of clippings from the world press on the Democratic National Convention debacle . . .

1969—Student unrest, rights, and educational dilemmas were highlighted by Daniel V. Levine, Ralph Mansfield, David Leuthold, and others . . .

1970—Furor and gales of laughter greet Margaret and Don Tapperson's description of Missouri legislators, a voter's guide compressing 13 years of close observation which stripped the



1971—Special issues on poverty with original covers by LeRoy Neiman . . . another special issue on Cairo, Illinois, its confrontation between the black and white communities, which served as a model for a similar study by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission . . .

1972—A book-length study of racial controls in public housing by Harold M. Baron . . . also in-depth studies of housing in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago . . . a special issue on the status of women covers all phases and expression of the feminist movement . . .

1974—Reprint of the widely rejected Rand Report on the future of St. Louis (which until then most "civic leaders" had not read in full) . . .

1975—Richard H. Popkin and Barry Blassner suggest Robert F. Bennett as a likely candidate for Watergate's "Deep Throat." . . . the St. Louis United Way kills its research arm, the Health and Welfare Council, which had become uncomfortably independent in its recommendations . . .

1976—Special issues on "Grassroots Organizing" edited by Harold M. Baron . . . Gary Tobin's study of why people move . . .

1977—Special issued on neighborhood power edited by Dick Simpson . . . and on the Missouri and Illinois Arts Councils, their allocations, idiosyncracies and hidden obligations . . .

1978—A survey of legislation by the Chicago City Council proves its utter subservience to city hall . . .

SJR was the first to be awarded the Lowell Mellett Award for "Best Press Criticism" issued by the National Newspaper Guild. It was cited by the faculty of the S.I.U. School of Journalism, the Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists and others.

Commentators throughout the country were quick to recognize the contribution the *Review* could make. R. R. Bowker Company, publisher of the definitive volumes on "Magazines for Libraries," describes the *SJR*:

"... this regional journalism review is probably the best of its kind currently published. The depth and quality of coverage and the persistence of the writers' criticism of the media place it among the top review in the field. The articles are written by working journalists and a few lay critics, and they pull no punches. . . . All area newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations are covered in the articles. . . . Because the problems presented are universal, this bimonthly is highly recommended."

1979—"Beyond the facade of urban renewal," assembled by Dennis R. Judd, pinpoints the powers that create decay and segregation . . . a survey of 40 Missouri and Illinois corporations regarding \$48 million in questionable payments or of dubious legality (continued over three issues) . . .

1980—A tribute to 31 emerging writers in Missouri and Illinois assembled by Howard Schwartz and Dan Jaffee . . . a special issue on democracy and public education assembled by David L. Colton . . .

1981—Two special issues, "Imprisonment in America: An American Tragedy" and "Alternatives to Imprisonment: Hope Amidst Despair" assembled with the help of Scott Decker, offer a local and national report on current actions . . .

1982—A special report on the cooperation movement, assembled with the help of Robert Mayer, is a primer for activists and observers and includes an extensive list of resources . . .

1983—Earthquake in St. Louis? . . . The day the Mississippi ran backwards . . . Dave Byrne haunted by legacy of Daley's fiscal follies . . .

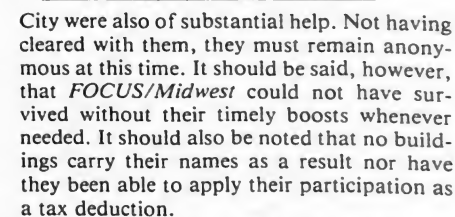
While the potential of *FOCUS/Midwest* has never been fully realized, it has tried to be a voice of those qualities which have made America an ideal to be emulated.

¹Over the years, the core of financial support came primarily from supporters in Chicago, although many in St. Louis and Kansas

With the August 1983 issue, *SJR* became a monthly and increased the number of pages to 28, with the September 1983 issue to 32, and the January 1984 issue to 40. It also modernized its format, added several columnists, and is now soliciting advertising.

The growth and impact of *SJR* will depend not only on its staff but also on the maturity of the St. Louis business community: Will it welcome a critical journal with which it may not always agree? Early indications are that the media, business institutions, and readers indeed value an independent and outspoken journal and will give it their full support.

(*) Much of the historical data and comments are based on a study by Claude-Jean Bertrand, a faculty member at the University of Paris. Bertrand studied media criticism in the United States as a research fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. Although the study was completed in 1978, it remains as the most authoritative survey of its kind. It is available from the Freedom of Information Center, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 652 (Report No. 0019).



²It is impossible to name all or even a substantial number of co-workers who deserve credit for helping create *FOCUS/Midwest* over the past 21 years. Among them are Roland Klose, who joined *FOCUS/Midwest* early last year, designers Peter Geist, Chip Reay, and Daniel Pearlmuter. Some of the more regular writers and contributors in no particular order include Irving Dilliard, Pierre de Vise, Dick Simpson, Mark M. Perlberg, Steve Means, Elmer Gertz, Robert H. Salisbury, Harry Mark Petrakis, Harry Cargas, Harry Barnard, Dan Saulk, Robert J. Havinghurst, Leonard Hall, Curtis D. McDougall, Leon M. Despres, Sidney L. Wilens, Irving Achtenberg, Sheldon Gardner, J.S. Fuerst, Martin E. Marty, Sidney Lens, Robert Farnsworth, Harriett Woods, Paul Simon, Abner J. Mikva, and also those mentioned in the survey of highlights. Originally, about 12 teams of about 10 each in various specialties were enlisted as editorial advisors. It is interesting to note that the first two enrolled later became chancellors of Washington University: Thomas H. Eliot and William H. Danforth.

IN 1984 WHO WILL WATCH BIG BROTHER?

We Will!

The St. Louis Journalism Review has been St. Louis's eyes and ears for 14 years and it's still setting records for

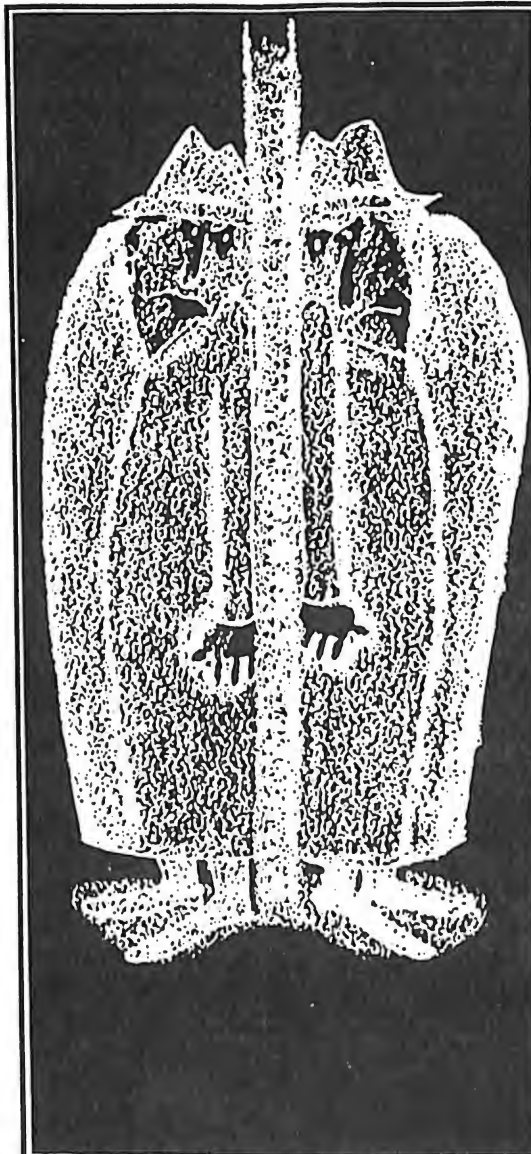
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